

CHAPRA: Announce!

ASS.: Burlington, Hilberg 1.

QU.: Well - Saul Hilberg, I would like to know, why, studying the Holocaust, you took such a deep interest in the transportation problem. Because as a matter of fact, we know what happened, we have the result, we know that 6 million Jews were killed by the Nazis and we know that at least 2/3 or more than 2/3 of these 6 millions had been shipped with railroads with trains, in order to be killed, when they were shipped in the killing centers. I think that the result is enough important in itself and I would like to know and as a matter of fact that is the question that you ask to yourself when you start your beautiful article on the railroad problem - why should one be interested in this?

HL.: Well, from the start, that is to say 30 years ago, when I began the work, I was interested not merely in the result that everyone knew, but in how that result came about. And for this reason I set myself the task of finding out the various means that were employed by the Germans for the destruction of the Jews. In those days the only thing to do was to look at documents coming through Bernburg, and I did do that. But after a while, even after being at Alexandria, Virginia, which at that time held the largest collection of German documents, I became aware of a very peculiar gap in the picture: there was nothing, almost nothing about the railroads. And the very fact that this material was missing in such large collections that contained a great deal of information about the party about industry, about the army even, about many other sectors of German life, that very fact made me a stubborn searcher for material about the railroads. And after I began this search, it occurred to me more and more that there was indeed a great deal of significance in the operation of the railroads themselves in this particular pro-

RE.: cess. Because everywhere and everyone had emphasized ... the emphasis was on quite simply the people that were shooting, the SS the Einsatzgruppen, the personnel of the camps, the Gestapo. And very little emphasis, very little light was shed on the people behind the scene who did 90% of the work that led to the final result. And it occurred to me that the railroads had been involved to a considerable extent. Because transport was not a simple thing. And then it occurred to me that the railroads, isolated as they were from ideologic activity, isolated as they were from the rest of the bureaucracy by the very fact that they were a coöperate entity within a ministry, that if the railroads were involved to the same extent and with the same effectiveness and with the same relentlessness as other agencies that that was very significant, because then we would have a new wheel of the totalitarian system. And that is what led me to searching over three decades for railroad material.

QU.: Yes, but I understand what you mean, but one could say that after all these were merely technical problems. As you say, there is no ideology behind. But this was technique, and how this technique can give the insight in what is a totalitarian apparatus?

RE.: An actual fact if you look at the operations of any other agency, including even the Foreign Office, if you look at the Interior Ministry, if you look at the Finance Ministry, if you look at the banks, if you look at the Armies which were pushing into Russia, they were all of them solving technical problems. The destruction of the Jews occurred in the process of technical problems being solved - this was not only the property of the railroads, everyone was approaching the destruction from the same vantage point: a problem had to be solved.

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QU.: Specific technical problems.

RE.: A specific... the substance of the result emerged out of the individual tiny solutions to individual tiny problems. So there is no difference between the railroads [in this respect] and the most extreme SS units in action.

QU.: Yes.. And could you elaborate more, could you say and could you go into the details and explain what you have find?

RE.: About the railroads?

QU.: Yes.

RE.: Well, let me say to start with that I wish I had found out more because something quite unique, or not quite unique, but remarkable about the railroads is that the documentation about the railroads is not to be found in the Federal Archives of Germany, just as it was not included in the Alexandria document file of the Nürnberg document file or any other collection that was accessible. So that to start with one has to.. one must say that all we have from the railroads are miscellaneous material some of which... most of which come from Poland of the Soviet Union. And looking at these handful of material one must figure out what happened, which is a very difficult task, because all my work, quite frankly, is ah.. very, very simply the solution of a gigantic Jigsaw Puzzle. What it comes to is, if you can imagine a Jigsaw Puzzle with many thousands of pieces. If one has the pieces and one or two are missing, one can still see the totality, one can see the Gestalt, but what do you do with the segment of a Jigsaw Puzzle if you have only three or four pieces and you must, somehow, draw the

RE.: total picture from that small handful? And that's the problem with the railroads, you see. But even so I think we have made a major start towards unlocking the mechanisms which operated there and which were ultimately being employed against the Jews in terms of the two major components, the financial one and the operational. The traffic and the operations. And to that extent I think we now have certain basic principals which I believe we know. One of them is of course that Jews were transported as any other person or cargo....

BOBINE 387

Can.: Annonco!

Ass.: Burlington, Hilberg 2.

QU.: Okay.

RE.: The two components, financial and operational, represent two segments of the structure of the Reichsbahn, the Traffic Division, which was staffed by accountants and jurists, and the Operational Division which was almost entirely composed of ingeniers. The significance of the financial, and the basic principal of the financial operation was that in principle the Reichsbahn would ship any cargo, whether it was inanimate cargo or people, in return for payment.

QU.: They were ready to ship...

RE.: They were ready to ship in principle any cargo whatsoever, if they were paid. Now to be sure there were priorities, but in principle they would ship people whether from concentration camps, whether to concentration camps, whether Hitler Youth going on vacation, whether German soldiers, whether munitions or whether industrial cargo if they were paid, this was a service organization. And therefore the basic...

RE.: pricecontrolled key was that Jews were going to be shipped to Treblinka, were going to be shipped to Auschwitz, Sobibor and any other destination so long as the railroads were paid by the track kilometer, so many Pfennig per mile. And the basic rate was the same throughout the war.

QU.: Everybody.. was.. there was no difference.

RE.: Everyone.. no difference, with .. with children under ten going at half fare, children under four going free. And the payment had to be made for only one way. The guards.. the guards, of course they had to have return fare paid for them because they were going back to their place of origin.

QU.: Excuse me, the children were shipped in the extermination camps, the children under four..

RE.: .. went free.

QU.: Had the privilege to be gassed freely.

RE.: Yes - the transport was free, and in addition to that, because the personal had to pay... the agency that had to pay was the agency that ordered the train and that happened to have been the Gestapo. Eichmann's office, because of the financial problem which that office had in making payment the Reichsbahn agreed on group fare. So the Jews were being shipped in much the same way as any excursion fare would be granted as they were enough people travelling. The minimum was 400, a kind of charity fare, 400 was the minimum. So even if they were fewer than 400 it would pay to say that they were 400 and in that way get the half fare for (.....) as well.

*for other things important*

RE.: And that was the basic principle. Now of course, <sup>if</sup> there was exceptional filth in the car, which might be the case, if there was damage to the equipment, which might be the case, because the transports took so long and the inmates to the extent to five to ten per cent died on route, then there might be an additional bill for that damage. But in principle, so long as payments were being made, transports were being shipped. Sometimes, the SS got credit. Sometimes, transports went out before payment, because, as you see, the whole business was handled, as in the case of any other chartered traffic especially on any really personal traffic of any kind through a travel bureau, "Mitteleuropäisches Reisebüro" would handle some of these transactions, the billing procedure, the ticketing procedure, where smaller transports were involved, the SS would...

QU.: It was the same bureau, who was dealing with any kind of normal passenger, which was,?

RE.: Absolutely, absolutely. Just the official travel bureau. Mitteleuropäisches Reisebüro will ship people to the gas chambers or they will ship vacationers to their favorite resorts, and that was basically the same office and the same operation, the same procedure, the same billing.

QU.: No difference..?

RE.: No difference whatsoever. And as a matter of fact everybody would do this job as if it was the most normal thing to do.

QU.y And it was not a normal job.

RE.: No, it was not a normal job. As a matter of fact, you know, even.. even the complicated currency procedures were followed in much the same way as with any other transactions, if borders had to be crossed, and that was very frequent.

QU.: For instance..?

RE.: Well, I think the most interesting example is of course Greece the.. the transports from Saloniki, Greece, in the spring of 1943 involving some 46 000 victims over a considerable distance, so that even with ~~the~~group fare the bill came to almost 2 Million Mark, which was quite a sum. And the basic principle, you see, was such traffic is that which is employed in the usual, customary way even to this day all over the world: one pay~~s~~ in the currency of the place of origin. Then, one has to pay the participating railroads and routes in their own currencies, so that...

QU.: From Saloniki, they had to cross Greece..

RE.: They had to cross Greece

QU.: .. and it was Drachmas...

RE.: In Greece, it was Drachmas, and then you might have to go through the..

QU.: Yugoslavia..

RE.: yes, to ~~Serbian and Croatian~~ serbian and croatian railroads, and you might have then to go to the Reichsbahn and pay in Mark. Now,

ironically, the problem was, you see, that the military commander in Saloniki, who was in charge, so he, in a sense, was the ultimate person responsible for paying for these things, didn't have the Mark, and he didn't have the Reichsmark, although he did have the Drachma, the Drachma, you see, he had from the confiscated Jewish property which was used to pay for these things, this was the self-financing principle. The SS or the military would confiscate the Jewish property and would proceed especially from bank deposits, .. would pay for transports.

Qu.: This means that the Jews themselves had to pay for their death.

Re.: Absolutely. You have to remember one basic principle there was no budget for destruction.

Qu.: Yes.

RE.: So, that is the reason that confiscated property had to be used in order to make the payments. Allright, the property of the Jews in Saloniki was confiscated, but the proceeds were in local greek currency. The Reichsbahn of course would want payment in Mark. How then do you change the Drachma into Mark? Now you have exchange controls right within occupied Europe. The only way it could be done of course is if somebody in this occupied zone obtained Mark. But how could they? This was not such a simple thing in wartime, and therefore, for once, there was a default, and the railroad had shipped all of these Jews to Auschwitz without compensation.

Qu.: I can imagine that this originated a lot of red tape.. correspondence



HILBERG 9

Re.: It originated correspondence which went on for more than a year between various representatives of various agencies including military, railroads and foreign office, am most incredible correspondence which is preserved in the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz.

Qu.: These documents exist..

Re.: These documents exist because they have been found in <sup>the</sup> records of the Finance Ministry.

Qu.: And they didn't yield for one year?

Re.: Oh, they would not yield, because after the fact, after the Jews had been shipped to Auschwitz, they couldn't see any good reason for paying.

Qu.: The SS, you mean?

Re.: Yeah - well, not only the SS, you see - one couldn't see any good reason for making available the currency. So therefore, one simply rode it off - it was an intra-office transaction, but the interesting thing is, that each budget, railroad budget or any other agency budget was nevertheless kept separately. So\* this is like one agency having dealings with another, payment has to be made from the army to the railroads. In this case it wasn't.

Qu.: And why was it the Army which was involved in ah- in Saloniki, directly?

Re.: The Army was involved directly...

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Qu.: The Wehrmacht?

Re.: Yeah, it was involved ~~mixxxxx~~ in Saloniki and it was involved in France, because the German Army itself administered these territories. These were territories under military ... military rule, as opposed to several other forms of government, civilian Reichskommissariat and so forth. So this war ~~x~~ directly ruled by the military. So they had the ultimate responsibility for making payments because any of the SS men there was under the military commander at least for purposes of such things, payments, jurisdiction.

Qu.: It's fantastic..But were they not aware, or astonished, because it seems that there was another problem too, because as a matter of fact most of the Jews were shipped in freight cars, no?

Re. The most amazing thing about it is that notwithstanding the fact that Jews were shipped in freight cars, the railroad still billed the SS as though the shipment had taken place in regular passenger cars third class. In other words, there was no difference in the payment. Indeed, there was no difference in the various offices. The offices that shipped the Jews were civilian traffic, so the key, the principle was that if people would be shipped by whatever means ~~x~~ the passenger sections of the railroads were responsible for the shipment and they billed the SS accordingly. The substitution of freight cars was done only because of the shortage of passenger cars, because quite obviously no one would insist that Jews of all people should be shipped in passenger cars when on arrival they would be gassed anyway.

Qu. Yes. This means they were even ready to earn some money?

Re. That's correct. In other words, one can see it in one of the key documents of the Generalbetriebsleitung Ost which was engaged in the actual scheduling of the trains, and there you see the scheduling people involved with those that dealt with passenger traffic rather than with freight traffic.

Qu. And it was the same man that was in charge.

Re. Absolutely. Always passenger traffic. Always passenger traffic. So even if the Jews were ...

BOBINE 388

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg, 3.

Qu. Okay.

Re. The basic conclusion then is that whereas the Jews were being booked as people for purposes of payment they were then shipped as cattle, to get to their destination.. Even though all of the people that were involved in the operation of passenger traffic, people here eventually .. this made no difference, they were shipped in the cattle cars to Auschwitz, to Treblinka and to other camps.

Qu. Yes. Of course, no one of them was.. after the war was .. went on trial?

Re. No, there is no one at all who was actually placed on trial.

although various proceedings were initiated, none ever were concluded, to my knowledge, nor do I think any of them will be.

Qu. Yes. Its because they say that the transportations were only means to an end.

Re. Everyone insists upon this very point, even someone I was talking to in Frankfurt, who, as it happens, was involved in putting up some signal equipment in Auschwitz, but I did not come to see him because of any awareness of his past, indeed I only went there because I was looking for some material, that I thought he might have, an extraordinary kind, considerate, helpful person. Now, in the 60ties. We went through a discussion of Auschwitz, we went through a discussion about the role of the railroads in that operation. Then he was in no sense tranked to hide any thing at all, he was giving me instructions and have to read documents, but at one point he said: "The railroads are but a means to an end." It is the uniform comment which runs like a refrain throughout the system, and nobody has to tell them to say this, it is a spontaneous statement.

Qu. But I think that eh.. eh.. this will lead us to the second aspect with the operations. I mean, did these Jewish trains, these trains which were carrying the Jews to the extermination.. extermination camps did they have a name? How were they called, registered?

Re. Well the astonishing thing is that when you deal with the operation of the system itself you now come to grips with the most substant of aspects (?) of the entire operation. Two of them: putting together the cars, that is to say the mobilization of equipment itself,

Qu. The wagons?

Re. The wagons. And secondly, making available the time of a train, which is called scheduling. Then both were scarce, cars were scarce and time was scarce. I thus thought, for many, many years that there must have been a priority system into which these particular trains would fit. And I was looking for such a priority system. But whenever I saw one, I did not see any designation of Jewish trains anywhere. And of course that was my failing. How would a German administration place these particular death trains into a category of trains, without admitting on paper that this is what they were doing? (Thus we find the most paradoxical situation of all: Jewish Trains, that is to say, death trains, were leaving for their destination without priority for the most part, without priority - there were certain exceptions, especially (not incomprehensible) under the war. And yet this does not mean that these trains were left behind. The one conclusion that I drew, and this is perhaps the most significant of them all - no Jew was left alive for lack of transport. Somehow or other, these people managed to find time, special time, or to find cars wherever they could get them, to get the job done, and no one in this system failed in that task.

Qu. But we have talked.. we have talked with at least two men, one is Speer, who was Armament Minister, and of course he was in charge of the transportation at least of the Wehrmacht, and the other one was a man of the Reichsbahn, Schelp, and they say with a kind of contempt when one asks this kind of precise questions "How did you do this, there was a shortage of cars, and there were bombings and so on" they just lift their

shoulders and say "This was not important. Hundred Jewish trains or thousand, we had such an apparatus of operations that this did not count." This is what they answer.

Re. From a certain perspective they are of course right. Whenever you ask any person who is in charge of a very very large operation how to account for something happening in a sector of it, he will say: "Look, I am in charge of so much, why are you asking me about so little? This is not important!" However, it is not that person, it is not Ganzenmüller himself except on one or two occasions, who was asked to approve of these transports. No, the request always came from an SS-captain, was somebody in this rank. to his opposite number in the railroad system, little people, comparative-ly little people, dealing with other comparatively little people. And it is these little people who had to appain (?) the transports from the tiggerones and to the little people it was important, and as in any organization, when somebody comes foreword and says: "I want so much, I want this and that," the question is why do you want it? Is your request more important than any other request should it receive priority? And the significance is, that in every case these people did succeed and of course, in one or two occasions Ganzenmüller himself had to help out. That means, that the issue was important enough, so that when for example traffic was tight up, he was called upon by none other than Wolff, the chief of the personal staff of Heinrich Himmler's office, to make possible the transport of people to the..

Qu. Ganzenmüller was a pure technician, he was the Secretary of the transports.

Re. Yes, he was the Staatssekretär, he was the highest ranking civil servant in the administration of the railroads, quite obviously, and he would, I am sure, regard his task, as having been a technical one. But what a technical task it is to fight a war, to destroy a people and to do all this ~~■~~ under bombs, with sabotage, with shortages, what a technical task, here again, we find that history itself is a whole mass of technical tasks.

Qu. And they fulfilled it?

Re. They certainly did.

Qu. Yes. But now to come back to eh.. the denomination of these trains. How did they do it, because these trains, they must have been ,...

Re. That's right. You have seen that they had no very special names, and the fact of the matter is that, and here I must go into some detail, the civilian trains in general were of two kinds. There were those that went at specified times, whether or not there were any passengers This is the usual experience any traveller has when he wants to go from one place to the other, he is trained to travel on a regularly scheduled train. But there were other trains, which would not travel at all unless there were enough requests, (in this case, the request would come from the Gestapo) Unless there were enough passengers to justify the dispatch of a train. Such a train was called a special train, a Sonderzug. It is still a special train, to this very day Die Deutsche Bundesbahn uses this designation for such trains. The designation is not limited to wartime, or the nazi-regime, it is the general, customary and usual term, it is ~~ist~~ being used to this very day.

Qu. (en même temps que le précédent) To this day there are Sonderzüge?

Re. So, a Sonderzug, a Sonderzug is any train which travels between regularly scheduled trains on a special schedule, that's the definition. So a Sonderzug - Hitler's own personal train was a Sonderzug, a death train was also an Sonderzug, there were all kinds of Sonderzüge.

Qu. That means, it is a train which is smuggled.. in the..

Re. .. which is interpellated, that's correct. It is allotted time between regularly scheduled trains. The problem is to find the time. This is the problem the railroad people called a Tempo, because of course, there must be a certain milage, kilometers between trains going in the same direction so that one doesn't slime into the other. And this means, one has to find time, which is a technical task again, but a rather difficult one, most expesially when you consider, that timetables were set for each Reichsbahndirektion for each sector, and that these various timetables had to be glued together, ~~th~~ so that a train could go over a long distance from one point to the other, and that took a great deal of discussion, a great deal of coordination, a great deal of thought.

Qu. It is a very difficult task, as a matter of fact?

Re. Well, it isn't a very simple task, no, it isn't. It's complicated. Not terribly difficult, but it is certainly complicated. And they did that, so in both, scheduling, and car allocation, and locomotive allocation, they had to make a lot of decisions, this



HILBERG 17

was not one simple decision "Okay, go". This was a lot of decisions.

Qu. And, I have another question: who decided to ship let's say a transport of Jews coming from ....

BOBINE 389

Ass. Burlington, 4, Hilberg.

Qu. Yes, I would like to know, because it is a problem that I had when I was in Poland: who decided, who took the decisions to ship a train of Jews - let's take the Polish Jews, because I think it's clearer, because it was more concentrated, - either to Treblinka, or to Sobibor, or even sometimes to Auschwitz. Because I had the feeling that sometimes the decision was taken at the very last moment. That they shipped the trains, but they didn't know exactly in which camp, which extermination camp to.. to send it.

Re. Well, here again, the decisionflow begins in Berlin, where the substif matter is how many Jews are going to be shipped from were in a certain direction. We have for example right here the record - one of the documents of the Generalbetriebsleitung Ost. There were three regional offices of the Reichsbahn for purposes of making schedules; depending upon the direction in which the train was going the decision would be made in the Generalbetriebsleitung Ost or West or Sd. Now - this is an Ostbetriebsleitung. So - here we see a document dated the 16th of January 1943 and if we turn the page, we will see that here are already certain transports being scheduled for the end of the month and later on February, with precise date

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of departure and precise destination listed. So that for example a transport leaving Berlin on a 2nd of February to Auschwitz or leaving Bialystok for Treblinka on the 9th of February is already on the list as a result of a discussion that was held on a 16th of January.

Qu. 16th of January, and they foresee already for eh.. how long in advance..

Re. .. and they already foresee ... actually I would say an entire month.

Qu. Yes?

Re. An entire month. Sometimes, it would take longer. This does not mean that this schedule, which was not really a final schedule, was to be treated as though it were locked in. You will notice for example that in some cases the time of departure is listed and in other cases it is not, because they simply hadn't figured out, at this point, how they are going to push these special trains through in regular schedules, and they were going to do this in some subsequent meeting.

Qu. They had to be flexible?

Re. They had to be very flexible. And as the war went on, the flexibility became a greater requirement. For example, there might be bombings, or more often railroad repairs or extensions as a consequence of which at the very last moment trains might be shifted let's say from Sobibor to Treblinka or wherever. And this might be done within days of the final transport leaving. Thus, flexibility was a key...

-Qu. According to this flexibility eh - can one imagine that the final decision could have been made in some cases not by Berlin, by the.. by the people of the ...

Re. Absolutely..

Qu. ..of the .. of the railways themselves.. on the spot.

Re. Oh yes. You must remember this: even though Generalbetriebsleitung Ost was located in Berlin, one should not refer to that particular office as quote Berlin. Because Generalbetriebsleitung West was not located in Berlin, Generalbetriebsleitung Süd was not located in Berlin, so it's coincidental that Ost is in Berlin. It's because Berlin itself is facing East.

Qu. Yes.

Re. So, in short, here we are already dealing at a regional level with transport, and finally we make.. we deal with transports at a subregional level, or even at the local level where the final scheduling orders "Fahrplananordnungen" are being drafted, pursuant always to the basic structure laid down in the basic directive.

Qu. Yes.

Re. So we are dealing here with a .. a decision first within the transport ministry itself to deputate one of the three Generalbetriebsleitungen, depending upon where the category of transport are going, whether it should be sent West, South or East, alright, this one is obviously East, so there it goes. That is the first decision. The second decision is taken right here: where. when

and what time perhaps are these transports going to leave. To which camps are..

Qu. They..

Re. May I say these are not only Jewish transports, there are all listed transports here, they are not dealing with only Jewish transports. And now we can tell, the purpose, or rather the nature of the passengers from the designation of the transport which is in a column right here, and we can see that for example DA. and this comes to the question that you asked earlier, refers to Jews who are quite definitely outside of Poland and Jewish transports outside of Poland are called DA transports.

Qu. DA - what is the meaning of DA, there is one...

Re. There is only speculation about it. and I have heard the speculation David, but I have had no confirmation of it from any German document.

Qu. David?

Re. It might be. But this is speculative, and even those people in the railroads are only speculating, and it is astonishing that people who could have been using this designation all of the while are now unsure what its origin is. But notice, that DA is about the only designation that is not immediately obvious. VD - Volksdeutsche - that's very clear. Rm are Rumanians - that's pretty clear. PQ are Poles - that's very clear. And later one we even see PJ, which I believe to be Polish Jews, Dolnische

Juden. But DA, which is one of the original..

Qu. It goes from Bialystok to Auschwitz, probably.

Re. Yes, yes. Now, we always see the PJ, or in some cases we see another designation, which is less clear, especially later on - eh.. where we just don't know what it means, or rather we do know what it means but we don't know why it is that particular designation. There is a very rudimentary attempt to disguise the nature of the transport, but it is extremely rudimentary..

Qu. Rudimentary?

Re. Very rudimentary. It's, It's basically not hard to figure out even if just by process of elimination, that these are Jewish transports. DA is a Jewish transport, from Berlin to Auschwitz: there are no Germans going to Auschwitz so obviously it's a Jewish transport. DA 15 - February 2nd 1943, going to Auschwitz, very clearly.

Qu. And how did you yourself come to this.. to this findings?

Re. I found the document which is dated the 16th of January for the first time in 1968, when I was visiting Germany, in a folder which had been sent there from the Soviet Union. Indeed, this item, and others, abragating about a hundred pages some more, came from a railroad station in Minsk. This itself is fascinating, because here we see the extent to which the information was spread throughout occupied Europe. The very fact that this particular document which is the ~~Rof~~setastone (?) from which we learn all about the operation of the railroads could have reached a point as far East as Minsk

which is farther than most of the transports went, they only went to Auschwitz or Treblinka or Sobibor is indication of the way in which the circular corrisystem of these railroads worked, that everybody got to know everything almost of necessity, because trains moved. they are not stationary, you are not operating a school system here, you are operating a moving system.

Qu. Yes.

Re. So we found .. so I discovered it in.. in Germany, and that is not to say that I knew what it meant at that point. Most particularly because right on top I could see a ~~man~~ PW which mystified me. PW.

Qu. PW - what means..

Re. Well, now I know it means Personenwagen, but this is just precisely the point that we made before - I just could not believe at the beginning that a person in charge of ~~the~~ Personenwagen in the Generalbetriebsleitung Ost would be signing such a document, when everybody has so well known that these people were being shipped in cattle cars. So the ~~fx~~ very fact, you see, that I had known beforehand that the transports actually were organized in cattle cars stopped me for a long time from realizing that people in charge of Personenwagen, passanger cars were going (.....) their usual business of scheduling these trains. So it took me for a while to realize this, and we don't have ready made organization charts either. They have to be put together from the documents. So we finally, or I finally discovered in

HILBERG 23

this case who Jacobi was, what his role was. And he is one of the decision makers in Generalbetriebsleitung Ost. He decides the matter of car allocation in part of fact, that is to say - how many cars are needed, for how long they are needed, - he is not the scheduling man, that is somebody else, that's a man called Fröhlich in that particular Generalbetriebsleitung Ost. Nor is he still another man, who is dealing with the coordination about the transports, insofar as they required coordination with the military, and that's Bebenhof, that is a third person. Now all of these are bureaucrats in a single office, they get together, they have a long discussion, they have their own Jewish experts and finally they come out with a document like this which is hammered out...

BOBINE 390

Ass. Burlington Hilberg 5.

Re. Incidentally, the special Jewish expert in Generalbetriebsleitung Ost is a man called Klemm, spelled K-l-e-double m, Bruno. I believe it is Bruno. I spent a lot of time on disentangling three different Klemms, until I decided on him, he is missing, and it is almost impossible now to even know which precise office he held within the Betriebsleitung. That itself already is significant, because the man, even though he chaired conferences to hammer out timetables like this was not sufficiently high ranking to be listed in a railroad directory, which is a pretty thick publication, and which has a lot of names in it.

Qu. You mean the railway directory of today?

Re. No. I am speaking of the one of 1942 and 1943, which are very rare documents these days. Very few copies remain, one can see one in Frankfurt and one can see one in Ludwigsburg and there is allegedly a third one in the hands of one of the railway people, and that's it. That's just a list of the important official.. you know.. officials, and the various posts that they held at that time. Not a secret document at all. bat very scarce.

Qu. Yes. And Klemm is not listed?

Re. He is not. Not listed in any organization chart which would make it possible to figure out whether he worked in the context of the military division, "L", which by the way stands for Landesverteidigung, I believe, or whether he perhaps was in one of the other two that might also qualify. But you have to remember that there was a system of flexibility also organizationally, that one person would take the place of another if need be to do the job.

Qu. And tell me about your breakthrough.

Re. My breakthrough was entirely intellectual. I had this particular rosetta-stone for quite a long time..

Qu. Rosetta stone?

Re. Yes. And I studied it, still not knowing what to make of some of the items of information in it. And then I observed a Fahrplan-anordnung, that is to say a scheduling order, issued by a local Reichsbahndirektion or Generalbe- Generaldirektion der Ostbahn, with the same number than I found here. And then it occurred to me



that is to say, the same number of a particular train, that I found here - and then it occurred to me that of course this a preliminary document, this is a preliminary quarter, it is a general framework, and that the process does not stop there. Because [this specific train must be routed through a scheduling order to its destination, making sure that it will traverse a certain route, that it will pass through certain railway stations and every station on route has to be notified of the train passing through and the approximate time when it will do so. So here you have another information flow, which is illustrated in this Fahrplananordnung, which is from the Generaldirektion der Ostbahn, a railway system contained in the Generalgouvernement, those districts of Cracow, Radom, Warsaw, Galicia and Lublin. This one is dated 15th September 1942, so that's not the one on which the breakthrough was made, but here we see another puzzle, even though this is not a new find, the Polish government has had this for a while, some of these things were published many years ago, yet I suspected they were not completely understood. I was puzzled by the number 33 which is in the upper left hand corner of the document, and the letter H, that follows it. I... I did just not know what to make of that and since I did have organization charts of the Transport Ministry itself, I was looking for a number 33 in these organization charts, not realizing that that was a futile endeavor. Now leaving aside the history of the Reichsbahn which accounts for the numbers, 33 is the number used by Reichsbahndirektionen in a field for that office which is in charge of scheduling trains. So whenever the number 33 appears, that is to say that somebody there is scheduling a train. If the letter H appears next to it, it means that the person normally doing the job

is not doing it this time, but that somebody is doing it for him. And if we look at..

Qu. H is the first letter for which name?

Re. Hilfsarbeiter, which is you know an <sup>u</sup>axiliary, an <sup>u</sup>axiliary. But in this case it's not a low ranking ~~proposition~~, and here we see that the scheduling experts Richter and Glas of the Reichsbahndirektion der Ostbahn and Generaldirektion der Ostbahn are involved in a few transports, these particular ones called Sonderzüge für Umsiedler aus dem Bezirk Radom. Now that's the district Radom, that's not the city of Radom, the district. And we see here the number of the order, this is number 587, that goes to show you how many of them there were, underneath the very interesting designation "NUR für den Dienstgebrauch", only for internal use, but this turns out to be a very low classification for secrecy.

Qu. Yes.

Re. And the fact that on this entire document which after all deal with death trains one cannot see - not only on this one - one cannot see it on others, one cannot see the word "Geheim", secret, is astonishing to me. That they would not have done that is very astonishing. And on second sort I believe that had they labelled it secret they would have invited a great many inquiries of people who get hold of it. They would then have perhaps raised more questions, they would have focused attention on the thing, and a key to the entire operation from a psychological standpoint was never to utter the words that would be appropriate to the action being taken. Say nothing - do these things, do not describe them. So

HILBERG 27

PKR

X

therefore "dies ist nur für den Dienstgebrauch". And now notice how many recipients this particular order goes. Bfe - Bahnhöfe, on this stretch there is one, two, three, four, five six, seven, eight, and here we are in Malkinia, which is of course the station near Treblinka.

Qu. Of course.

Re. But notice, that it takes eight recipients, for this relatively short distance, through Radom, to the Warsaw district, eight because the train passes through these stations. Therefore each one has to know. Not only that, but of course, you are not going to write two pieces of paper, if you can write one. So therefore, we find here not only Flr, which is a death train, going here, in the plan labeled thus, but we also see the empty train, after it has arrived in Treblinka, now originating in Treblinka, you can always know whether it's an empty train with the word "L" in front of it, "leer",

Qu. Yes - Rückleitung des Leerzuges ..

Re. Yes, and now, and now, and now..

Que. .. of the empty train...

Re. .. we are going back. Then we have another train, and now notice that there is very little subtlety to this numbering system, we are going from 9228 to 9229 9230 to 9231 to 9232 - hardly any originality here, it's just very regular traffic.

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HILBERG 28

Qu. Death traffic.

Re. Death traffic, of course.

Qu. How do you know that Bkr means death train?

Re. Well, here again of course, the only way that we know this kind of information for sure is that we know that the destination is Treblinka. And that the train does not go further. So when we consider that an entire train is going to Treblinka, there are after all several, rather many of them, then we say to ourselves: this was not a train carrying German soldiers on furlough, this was not a train carrying Polish workers to a labor camp, this was a train carrying people to a particular place, the object of which overwhelmingly, primarily and in 99% of all cases was death. And it is by these means that we identify the lettering. We do not have a document that says Kr means such and such. We have the explanations by Richter, who tells us that indeed that was a death train, thus confirming what we believe, and what we know.

Qu. You don't think that the.. that the fight.. that the secrecy was so primitive, so rudimentary. It doesn't come from the fact that after all.. after all it took place in Poland, and in Poland it's enough to go there today to discover that everybody knew. And the people, the Poles of the railway .. that everybody knew.

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HILBERG 29

BOBINE 391

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 6.

Qu. Okay.

Re. Looking at Fahrplananordnung number 587, /rather ~~than~~ <sup>a</sup> amazing amount of information packed into it, and this is the typical order for a Bedarfsfahrplan, that means one which is specially requested for special trains. And here we see that starting out in one ghetto which obviously is being emptied, the train leaves for Treblinka. We know the time that it takes to get there. It leaves on a 30th of September 1942 18 minutes after 4 o'clock, by schedule at least. Arrives there at 11h24 on the next morning. Now this is within the Radom district, going into the neighbouring district of Treblinka - that is an extremely long ride for such a short distance. We have to keep in mind that many transports took much longer to arrive at their destination, for instance when they came from Paris or wherever. This is also a very long train, which may be the reason that it takes so slow, that it takes such a long time.

Qu. There is the number of the... of the cars?

Re. It's just here... well, it's 50 J, that's a Wagenzug 50 Güterwagen, fifty of these Güterwagen, freight cars, filled with people, that's an exceptionally heavy transport, thousands of people in it.

Qu. According to the people of Treblinka today it was not exceptional at all.

HILBERG 30

*How many loaded?*

Re. Well, it may well be that especially from Radom from nearer points, they loades them up with as much as 3000 on a train, you can you can figure out ..

Qu. Yes..

Re. .. if 50 to 75 would be loaded on one car..

Qu. .. even more..

Re. would be loaded on one single car multiplied by 50, and that's a very large number of victims. Now, once the train has been unloaded, at Treblinka, and you noticed there were two numbers here, 1124, that's in the morning, and 1559, which is to say almost 40'clock in the afternoon. In that interval of time the train has to be unloaded, cleaned and turned around.

Qu. It has to be divided in.. in...

Re. .. has to be turned around. And you see here the same numbers appear as the Leerzug, now empty train, goes to another place. And it leaves at 40'clock, in the afternoonn, and now goes to that other place which is another small town where it picks up victims. And there you are, at 30'clock in the morning. It leaves on the 23rd, at 30'clock in the morning. And arrives there in the next day.

Qu. What is that astonishing, it seems to be the same train, as a matter of fact.

Re. It is the same - it is quite obviously the same..

Qu. .. the same train which gets each time another number..

Re. The number has to be changed quite obviously, correct. Then it goes back to Treblinka, and this is again a long trip, arrives in Treblinka and now gets back to yet another place. And the same situation, the same trip, and then yet another, goes to Treblinka and then arrives in Czestochowa on the 29th of September, and then the cycle is complete. And this is called a Fahrplananordnung and if.. and if you count up the number of - not empty numbers, but full ones, PKRs - there is one, there is one, here..

Qu. But why..

Re. That's two, three, that's four,

Qu. Why..

Re. We may be talking here about 10 000 dead Jews on this one Fahrplananordnung right here.

Qu. More than 10 000.

Re. Well, we will be conservative.

Qu. Yes. That's why such a document is so fascinating, as a matter of fact. Because I was in Treblinka, and to have the two things together, Treblinka and the document...

HILBERG 32

Re. Well, you see, when I hold a document in my hand - particularly if it is an original document, then I hold something which is actually something which the original bureaucrat held in his hand. It's an artefact, it's an leftover - it's the only leftover that rests.

Qu. Yes.

Re. The dead are not around. (quelques mots incompréhensibles).  
A real thing.

Qu. It is a real thing.

Re. Yes- those numbers mean something. The signatures mean something. It's not pieces of paper, it's an order, and by ~~the~~ reason of the of the fact that the order was sent from one office to another, the train enumerated here actually left with dead victims (?) actually went.

Qu. Yes. All this was true.

Re. Yes.

Qu. Tu coupes quand tu veux.

DOCUMENTS EN MUET - SANS CLAP!

BOBINE 386

Plan muet - Burlington 8 - documents.  
Burlington 24 - plan de coupe Claude

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HILBERG 33

BOBINE 392

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 9.

Qu. The deportation trains were slow, generally speaking, or fast

Re. Slow by any standard: of course all traffic was slowed down in wartime Germany, because trains were being overloaded with cargoes which automatically required them to travel a bit more slowly. And as the war progressed, freight trains were limited to approximately 45 miles an hour. But Jewish trains, I suspect, had a maximum speed of 30 miles an hour, and that would be even slower around the bergens and the köllns (??). Furthermore, the priority system insofar as it did exist required that Jewish trains, insofar as they had priority 2 - Dringlichkeitsstufe 2 - to be moving not only slowly, but to stop when a priority I train had to pass. So they would be put on a siding, while another train would move ahead. And this I think accounts with the fact that the journey took so long and the people in the sealed cars were suffering so much, specially during winters or in the hot summers.

Qu. I think that from Athens, I remember that what the Corfu Jews told me - well, they were shipped first by sea from Corfu to Piraeus, afterwards by train from Athens to Auschwitz. It took nine days and nine nights, or eight nights.

Re. That may have been the longest train journey, the Greek Jews being farthest away from Auschwitz, and I would imagine the same for the Jews of Rhodes, and from Athens and so on. This is a

Qu. It was not not a problem for the Germans. this slowness

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WILBERG 34

BOBINE 392 suite

of the Jewish trains.

Re. No, this was not the problem so long as the Jews were being shipped out - in that sense Europe could become free of Jews. Their arrival even with five or ten percent of the passengers dying on the way was not a matter of high priority so long as they got there and trains could be unloaded and the victims gassed.

Qu. Anyhow, they were doomed.

Re. Yes.

Qu. I talked with a Polish traindriver, he conducted Jewish trains from Bialystok and Warsaw to Treblinka and I asked him "Did you go fast or slow?", he said very fast, as fast as I could, and I think it was a projection of his own bad consciousness.

Re. Well, we've all the the schedules which themselves allowed for pretty slow traffic, and it is hardly likely that that particular train or trains was driving, would have ~~driven~~ arrived earlier, that he  
In fact they couldn't very well have because, as you noticed, each segment of the journey had been charted out in advance.

Qu. Yes, and if you.. if you could summarize in one or two formulas what you have said up to now, how would you .. would you say it?

Re. [I would say that for me in particular, the railroads are a conspicuous and significant element in the machinery of destruction. That the railroads illustrate that there is great destructive potential in an organization that operates efficiently, and which is ready to move with other organizations in the same direction, which understands the latent structure of the undertaking, [and which does not have to be either ordered or even informed of precise goals or purposes or aims. It is significant to me that the railroads insofar as we can now see were not specially indoctrinated in Nazi. And many of its leading personalities would have described themselves as good, practicing Christian moral men. And in their individual homelives quite probably were. In fact, the conspicuous element in the entire operation is the sheer absence of Jews becoming a special category of operations within this network. Schuh, Stange at the center, Klemm \* in Generalbetriebsleitung Ost, Stier in Cracow are examples of people who were by nature of the operation beginning to specialize in Jewish transports.] But even they have no special background that one can discover. And so once again we see, perhaps more crassly than in other cases, that ordinary men were performing extraordinary tasks. And that to me is a conclusion that transcends the railroads themselves.

Qu. Yes. What happened with them?

Re. Again I think most of them died a normal death, after having lived out their lives. A few were caught by the Russian, I am not entirely sure whether the Soviets realized who they were, but some did disappear from Generalbetriebsleitung Ost, which was apparently overrun by the Red Army, still others were being investigated by German prosecutors and to the 1960s and even 70s, but for

the most part insofar as we can find them, these officials were continuing their careers in the post-war world, and here I think it may be interesting to note that whereas most other organizations or agencies of Nazi Germany came to a hold in May 1945, whereas Ministries were virtually disbanded and industries were stopped, the railroads reconstituted themselves within a week, or within at most two weeks after the occupation of territory by British, American or French troops. They were already at work as though nothing had happened in a new postwar world. And so these men pursued their normal careers, they were promoted as they might have been expecting to, and are now perhaps retired and in a few cases still finishing the careers that they had begun then.

Qu. Yes. But some of them I think even gained - how do you say - grades..

Re. Oh absolutely, the most conspicuous would be Geitmann, who was in charge at one time of the Reichsbahndirektion in Oppeln, in whose jurisdiction was Auschwitz itself and who became a member of a four men directorate that ran the Bundesbahn for some years, 20 years -

Qu. Not the Reichsbahn, the Bundesbahn?

Re. Yeah, the Bundesbahn. Bundesbahn. But it's the same organization, the same people, the same tradition, the same procedure, only now a Sonderzug is really a train carrying youths to vacation,

Qu. Yes. Why did they try to make a secrecy of their involvement in the destruction of the Jews, do you have an explanation for this?

HILBERG 37

Re. Well, I think first of all they had...

PLAN de coupe de Claude - Burlington 25, muet.

BOBINE 393

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 10

Re. Right from the beginning, when the Allied Powers were looking for important persons in the regime and tried them at Nürnberg, I am quite convinced that no one was even thinking about the railroads as an integral part of the machine or of railroad men as possible war criminals. And therefore also no documentation was being collected either. Now, the effect of this quite obviously was that many of these documents disappeared, granting that the Allied air raids had destroyed them. But so many of the crucial Fahrplananordnungen were prepared in multiple copies that it is impossible to believe that everyone of them became burned during the course of the war, thus many of the railroad people could continue incognito as if they were without anyone realizing what they had done, no one suspecting it, not for war crime trials, nor for denazification proceedings, nor for anything else. It is precisely that fact that made some of the SS so very angry, because they were always being put before trials, in front of tribunals, as if they alone had done everything.

Qu. The bouc emissaire..

Re. Yes. But now, gradually it became clear that also the railroads had had such a function. And there were now two reasons for not publicizing this material. The first is quite obviously that some

of these people could still be reliable for their deeds and still be placed on trial, and the second, and I think increasingly more important reason is that the railroads want to hide the fact: as an institution they were involved in this operation. They don't want the reputation of having been the conveyors of victims to death camps. They don't want to be known in posterity as having done that. So they are amongst themselves quiet about it, although increasingly they begin to talk about their forgotten role in the mobilization of Barbarossa, the mounting of the attack upon the Soviet Union..

Qu. But they are proud of this..

Re. They are quite proud of that achievement. And yet, when it comes of course to the Final Solution of the Jewish question, any material whatsoever that even touches upon it is handled with very great care. And any official history - such is <sup>most</sup> especially Kreidler's History of the role of the railroads would not in one word mention Jews as having been one of the items being transported in these trains. And even when one or another railroad official would talk about the matter, and that is rare, he would do so on the basis of published reports, never revealing new information which obviously is not available to the general public.

Qu. Yes, but the.. the very fact that the Allied Powers, after Germany was defeated, never thought of prosecuting such people is meaningful, I think.

Re. It's very meaningful, yes. It means that the full implication of what is meant by a totalitarian system, the full meaning of

what was meant by mobilized Germany was not understood.

Qu. Yes. Or maybe they did, but that means - it would have been necessary to prosecute the whole of Germany.

Re. Well, it would have been necessary to prosecute individuals from every segment of organized society. It would have been necessary to prosecute not the whole of Germany, but that .. that sampling of it, that cross section of it that became involved.

Qu. Because as a matter of fact what was done was exactly the other way round. They decided to choose a sample of individuals and to concentrate all the guilt.

Re. Yes, they chose leaders, and not even all of those, and then they chose people who were as it were caught with machine guns in hands, or the gas kanisters. Those were the people.

Qu. Yes. The actual killers.

Re. The actual killers who said we are after all only the end product of a long process.

Qu. Yes. But I think that what you have.. what you have.. what you have found and which is really the reason why your book is a master book: you succeeded to show really the inside implications, how the destruction of the Jews has .. had been possible, and through which step, what did it.. what were the things that had to enter into play in order to make this destruction possible.

Re. Well, thank you.

Qu. No, no - it's not this. I have really to talk, to talk really about this. Because in which respect such a thing has been possible. Because as a matter of fact antisemitism is not new, and we can talk about the nazi antisemitism and about what was specific in the nazi antisemitism, this is for sure. But I don't think it is necessary to enter in this, it is for my taste too much ideological.

Re. Yes.

Qu. I am much more interested in the .. in the how, how the thing could happen, how did they actually happen, and the drive to kill always existed, and not only in Germany. But how suddenly the barriers could fall, in order to permit this gigantic extermination, this mass extermination. What were the prerequisites for such a.. such an achievement?

Re. Well, you know, it's a very difficult question. In all of my work I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid that I would come up with small answers, and I have preferred therefor to address these things which are minute or detail in order that I might then be able to put together in a Gestalt a picture which, if not an explanation, is at least a description, a more full description of what transpired. And in that sense I look also upon the bureaucratic destruction process - for this is what it was - as a series of lineal steps, taken in logical order. And relying above all as much as possible on experience, past experience. And this goes not only incidentally



for the administrative steps that were taken, but also the psychological arguments, even the propaganda. Amazingly little was newly invented, until, of course, the moment came, when one had to go beyond that which had already been established by precedent and one had to gass these people or in some sense annihilate them on a large scale. Then these bureaucrats became inventors. But like all, all inventors of institutions they did not copy-right or patent their achievements and they preferred obscurity.

Qu. Yes. Please, go on. (rit)

Re. Well, I think you are driving at..

Qu. I was completely with you, my question was not eh..

Re. Yes, I, I..

Qu. I think it was a practical one.

Re. I think you are driving at a deeper penetration of that question - how it was done. And I can tell you just how I asked myself the question, and how I proceeded to answer it for myself, and in that way perhaps come closer to what you want to hear. As I began that work, I was very young. perhaps it should be pointed out..

Qu. Yes - I would like to know the beginning, as a matter of fact

Re. Perhaps it should be pointed out that I was all of 22 years of age. And when I say that I began, I do mean to imply that I already had the ambition, that is the word, to describe the process as a whole. Now I had neither the knowledge or experience to estimate what it would take. I did need an ordering principle. I did need an outline. I did need something, that would enable me to go into piles of documents that were not indexed, and thus looking at one item pertaining to 1943 in the Justice Ministry, and another item pertaining to 1945 in the banks, and yet another item, talking about the SS in 1944, be able to put these documents, all of which are out of context into an order, into a definite pattern, that would make sense. And I had to use some tools of analysis for this purpose, and I obtained them, I obtained them, I did not make them up myself, and in particular I obtained the notion of the process, of the destruction process from one man, who wrote an affidavit immediately after the war, and almost casually and incidently gave me the clue, if you like the key. And this was of course Kasztner.

Qu. Kasztner?

Re. Absolutely.

BOBINE 394

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 11

Qu. What... what did they get from the past, the nazis?

Re. They got the actual content of measures which they took, for example the barring of Jews from office, the prohibition of intermarriages, the employment in Jewish homes of female persons under the age of 45, the various marking decrees, especially the Jewish star, the compulsory ghetto, the wardens of any will executed by a Jew that might work in such a way as to prevent inheritance of his property by someone who was a Christian. Many such measures had been worked out over the course of more than a thousand years by authorities of the Church and by secular governments that followed in those footsteps. And the experience gathered over that time became a reservoir that could be used, and which indeed was used to an amazing extent.

Qu. You, you mean that what one can compare?

Re. One can actually compare .. one can compare a rather large number of German laws and decrees with their counterparts in the past and find complete parallels. Even in detail - as if they were a memory which authentically extended to the period of 1933 and 1935, 1939 and beyond.

Qu. In such respect they didn't invent anything.

Re. They invented very little, and they did not invent the portrait of the Jew, which also taken over <sup>completament, entierement</sup> lockstop (??) and Barril (?) from writings going back to the 16th century. So even the propaganda, where they worked with imagination and invention, even there they were remarkably in the footsteps of those who preceded them, from Martin Luther to the 19th century.

And here again they were not inventive. They had to become inventive with the Final Solution, that was their great invention, and that is what made this entire process different from all others that had preceded that event. And in this respect, what transpired when the Final Solution was .. adopted, or to be more precise, when the bureaucracy moved into it, was a turning point in History. Even here I would suggest in logical progression, one which came to fruition in what might be called closure. Because from the earliest days, from the 4th century, 5th century, 6th century the missionaries of Christianity had said in a fact to the Jews: "You may not live among us as Jews." The secular rulers, who followed them, from the late Middle Ages, had then decided: "You may not live among us". And the Nazis finally decreed: "You may not live."

Qu. Yes. This means that the three steps were.. the first one was conversion..

Re. ... conversion..

Qu. .. followed by ghettoization,

Re. .. expulsion..

Qu. ...or expulsion..

Re. Expulsion. And the third was the "territorial solution". which was of course a solution carried out within the territories of the German command, excluding emigration - death.

Qu. The final..

Re. Final Solution. And the Final Solution, you see, is really final. Because people who are converted, can yet be in secret Jews. People who are expelled can yet return. But people who are dead will not reappear.

Qu. Yes. And in such a respect in the last stage they were really pioneers and inventors. This was something new.

Re. This was something unprecedented and this was something new.

Qu. Yes. And how can one figure.. give some ideas about the complete newness of this. Because I think that this was new for themselves too.

Re. Yes, it was new, and I think for this reason .. that one cannot find a specific document, a specific plan, outline or blueprint which states: "Now the Jews will be killed." Everything is left to influence from general words.

Qu. Influence from?

Re. General wording. The very wording Final Solution or territorial solution, or territorial solution leaves something to the bureaucrat that he must infer. He cannot read that document one cannot even read Goering's famous letter to Heydrich, at the end of July 1941, charging him in two paragraphs to proceed with the Final Solution. And taking that document

to side, everything is clarified far from it.

Qu. Far from it?

Re. Far from it. ~~It was an authorisation to invent,~~ it was an authorization to begin something that was not as yet capable of being put into words.

Qu. Well, I think that this is the best formular - the authorization to invent.

Re. I think it - I think of it that way.

Qu. Yes. And this was the case for every agency, as a matter of fact.

Re. Absolutely for every agency, in every aspect of this operation. Invention was necessary. Certainly at this point. Because every problem was unprecedented. Not just how to kill the Jews, but what to do with their property thereafter, and not only that, but how to deal with the problem of not leaving the world know what had happened. All of these multitudes of problems.

Qu. But this was what stroke me so much, because everybody talks even now about the German Ordnung, the German orderly way of .. of killing. and everybody is thinking about the .. the factory process of Auschwitz. But Auschwitz came very late, as a matter of fact. When you read what happened at the beginning with the first extermination camps, Chelmo, Belzec, Sobibor. it was a complete

disorder.

Re. Absolutely. People were being dumped along the route. There was a tendency, you see, of the part of the burocracy, to take steps before one realizes where these steps are actually going to end. So people were being transported, let us say to Lodz, let us say to Riga, let us say to Kaunas from Germany, and within Poland they were being shifted from one place to the other all in quote "preparation", without there being clarity as to what it is that was being prepared. Certainly not to the extent that one would know at the beginning where these Jews were going to die.

Qu. Yes. And why this tendency, or this general tendency of the German burocracy to act without even preparation in one way?

Re. I now believe that that is the only way in which one can act at all in such a matter. That when one talks about such a thing beforehand, one cannot possibly do it. And if one is going to do it, one cannot possibly talk about it. And this I think is an essential requisit and an essential attribute of such drastic activities as those we are talking about. And I doubt.. do believe as I did believe for some years that with the Germans as Himmler said it was a matter of inborn tact: one does not talk about these things. But this also means, you see, that one does not outline them, one does not plan them. The plan, the outline, the goal emerges from the steps as they are being taken. There is a sense of direction, you see, there is a sense that one is going in every more drastic steps towards something unprecedented. There is a sense of meeting History and of making History.

that is pervasive in the entire bureaucracy. And everyone, however remote he may be from the center of the action is somehow aware of it, and consensed the need for his contribution.

Qu. Yes. For instance, one of the very striking facts - and you talk about this in your book - when one reads about the first deportations, shipping to the East in 1940, 1941, in the Polish ghettos, when they start to ship the Jews from the Reich for instance, or Czechoslovakia, or Wien, the Altreich .. nothing is prepared to welcome them, to receive them. And the nazis were already in Poland in charge of the ghettos, let's take Lodz for instance, complained..

Re. A report about this influx of 20 000 people..

Qu. Yes. Complained to Berlin - what shall we do with all these Jews, these new Jews...

ROBINE 395

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 12.

Re. If you take the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, which was enacted on September 15th, 1935, you will find that this provision, that outlaws intermarriage<sup>and</sup>/sexual intercourse between Germans and Jews, goes back to the synode of Elvira in the year 506. If you look at the law of the reestablishment of the professional civil servants of April 7th, 1935, you will find that Jews were barred from holding public office by the synode of Clermont, in 535. If you would look at a decree



of July 25, 1938, whereby Aryans are not supposed to be seeing Jewish doctors, that particular provision goes back to a synod .. all the way again to the Middle Ages.

Qu. Even this?

Re. Even this. The Trulanic Synod of the year 692 in this case. If you look at such a decree as this of the Sozialausgleichsabgabe, which provided that Jews had to pay a special income tax for the support of organizations and so on, then you find that that goes back to the Synod of Gerona, in the year 1078. Added to that of course are the more famous measures, marking the Jews with a star, compulsory ghettoization, all of which have origins in canon law, in synods and decisions of the Church. There is thus a great reservoir of experience to draw upon and the remarkable thing about bureaucracy everywhere is that they invent as little as possible and use as much of the past as they can. And that's illustrated in this case. especially..

Qu. You said the propaganda too.

Re. The same is true for propaganda, because the German version in the years of the 1930th, alledging that the Jews are world conquerers, would go out to conquer the world if they could, that the Jews are criminals, that the Jews are parasites, all these themes can be found in the writings of Martin Luther, in Die Juden und ihre Lügen, published in 1535. As a matter of fact I might interpellate a personal story. When I was in Munich as

a young soldier, immediately after the capture of the city..

Qu. You mean in the American Army?

Re. In the American Army, yes, if it is necessary to add, and .. it is the American Army that captured Munich. I found a book by Luther published by the Nazi Party. I could not of course believe that this really was Luther, you see, I couldn't believe my eyes when I read it, but subsequently I went to the New York public library and found the original book, and could verify that the nazi party version, except for spellings, was entirely the same as Luther's original book. So once again, you see: even the propaganda could rest upon earlier conceptions and writings, going back in this case to the 16th century. Nothing new here. The newness came with the Final Solution itself. Because all of these measures supported Church policy, which was in the first instance the conversion of the Jews. To make their life miserable, sufficiently, so that they would see the light and become Christians. But the Church could not go further than that. The Church would not kill, for then it would loose its basic objective. And that's the reason that when it came to the Final Solution, the Germans had to become inventors and innovators on their own.

Qu. Yes, and the Church had not the same goals.

Re. No. Of course not.

Qu. Bon, tu coupes, tu coupes, tu coupes quand tu veux.

HILBERG 51

Cam. Annonce!

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 13

Qu. What seems to me remaquable, and I would like to have your comments on this point, is how the Germans have stolen the Jews during all the steps of the process of destruction, and at all the levels. How they started with expropriations of the Jewish enterprises and industries to go at the end with the looting in the ghettos, and even with the robbery of the belongings of the Jews in front of the gass chambers, and even the pulling out of the golden teeth. And I think it is really astonishing how a modern State, a highly industrialized State, the State of Krupp, IG-Farben could think of..of pulling the golden teeth out. And it seems that it is an ideology of anti-productiveness, of non-productivity, completely the other way round, a real ideology of destruction.

Re. The process of taking away property is a parallel one with the destruction of the Jews, because it accompanies every step that is being taken. In actual fact we see it going on from 1933 until the very end, because it does not even stop when the Jews have been gassed. The personal belongings have to be shuttled through the system, thus we see it even/being interrupted. as it were, when the Allies captured the various camps, and captured Berlin, and captured the Reichsbank. The very first step taken was the dismissal of Jewish civil servants and that is 1933, it is the first step of economic destruction, next come the

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aryanizations which pit German firms against Jewish enterprises, the process of course is being controlled by the Economy Ministry, which is trying to avoid a situation in which there is too much bidding, for what the German firms and German banks were calling objects, "Objekte", because here you see is the last stage during which Jews are capable of bargaining, and that bargaining has to be suppressed. So we have here the stage of what is called a voluntary aryanization, with banks always acting as middlemen in the process, taking some commissions, this is what the Dresdner Bank was involved with to a very great degree, and in the main, in this aryanization process German industry is more concentrated, it becomes even larger, that is to say, the relationship between large enterprises and small enterprises is now changed in favour of the large enterprises, because it is the larger ones that tend to acquire Jewish property, insofar as they are industrial undertakings of any sort.

Qu. They are the one which have the money..

Re. They have the money and have the know-how, and who have the means and <sup>the</sup> available funds with which to operate quickly and efficiently. But you must remember that in Germany the curtailment law in general favoured larger enterprises and Aryanizations fit into this general process. Now by 1938 we see the voluntary aryanizations becoming compulsory. Now, after Kristallnacht, that is the big step. There are to be no more Jewish enterprises, and those that are not worthy of being continued, that is to say the small ones, are to be liquidated, and the stocks are to be

acquired, the inventories are to be acquired by German trade associations. So we have now even fewer enterprises in operation, because you must remember, most of them weren't liquidated rather than aryanized, they are not even being continued. It is very interesting to see what happens after aryanization. There is a lot of conversation about the retention of Jewish firm names, and now you find all of a sudden that for example Rosenthal Porzellan, a Jewish enterprise, but acquired by Germans, should have of course a new name. The extirpation of the Jewish name of course was part of the destruction process. one is supposed to change street names, one is supposed to change all kinds of names insofar as they are Jewish. But the new possessors of this enterprises resist this particular demand..

Qu. Because Rosenthal is a good label..

Re. Well, it was a very good label, it was a property, you know, after the war what was going to sell Rosenthal china all over the world. So you see, it paid off, and this was not the only enterprise of its kind. There is a great deal of correspondence about simply retaining Jewish names. Even that was a problem. Now after the Jews have lost property, and particularly after the German Armies are marching into Poland and into other countries, where this whole process is being repeated, in Poland, in France and/especially in Holland and so on..

Qu. In the same..

Re. In the same way. The entire destruction process gets repeated, as soon as the Germans arrive somewhere, and that means

one has to define what is meant by a Jewish enterprise, and then one has to set maximum limits to the price that may be paid for a Jewish enterprise, and then one has to specify what is to happen to liquidate that enterprise, what is to happen to securities, what is to happen to other papers: this is a rather elaborate and complex process.

Qu. It is a difficult one.

Re. It's a very difficult one, it involves stock exchanges, it involves everything that is part and parcel of the commercial and financial world. But the Jews are now left in a position of having to labour.

BOBINE 396

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 14.

Re. After the outbreak of war, the expropriation process is aimed at taking from the Jews their labour or their personal belongings. That is to say, there is now much less to be gotten from any economic measures from the Jews than there was before. This is no longer the period when coal mines or other major enterprises can be obtained. There is no more major property, such as that of the Tatischeks, or the Rothschilds, or the Weinmanns to be taken. Instead, one is now looking at very poor people, one is exploiting them, one is exploiting their labour and one is trying to get the

last out of whatever there is to be gotten. And what is sometimes astonishing to me is the fact that here again you see the relentlessness of the destruction process, we see all of the expertise, we see all of the specialists, we see all of the procedures being employed to take the little things. Just as much energy is poured into the process at this point than there was before. So the meeting in the Labour Ministry, for example, to try to find out how to tax these very small Jewish wages. So they come up with the Sozialausgleichsabgabe, which was also incidentally imposed on Poles. Or they are trying to have various wage regulations, interestingly enough in Poland Jews very often were employed without any ..

Qu. ... salary..

Re. any salary, any pay whatsoever. But the situation was so chaotic, the situation was so absolutely out of hand, that finally the German administration decided that Jews were in principle to receive 80% of the Polish wage. Whereupon in one Kreis the Wehrmacht immediately dismissed all of its Jews because they were not going to pay 80%, and the Stadthauptmann in Czestochowa says, well, I assume that such a regulation, like others I received, can safely be thrown away, and I have done so accordingly. He is not going to obey any directive that forces him to pay even 80% of the wage. So we find here that basically the process goes on in the labour field. Later on of course, when the Jews are sent to various concentration camps, and particularly also

Auschwitz, we find that now the companies are required to pay the wages to the SS, who owned the Jews as slaves. And there they are the very same companies that were employed in the expropriation process, the ones that were looking for "Objekte" are now the employers of Jewish labour, IG Farben, or Krupp as an example. And just as efficiently as they had done those other things they now also use Jewish labour for production. Sometimes, when the Jews are being shipped out of Germany, questions arise to what is to happen to their pensions, what is to happen to the payments that were being made to retired Jewish employees, and here we find a very crass example indeed. In 1942, after the first transports had left with Jews to the East..

Qu. Of German Jews?

Re. German Jews now - the Oberfinanzpräsident from Berlin, that representative is the chief of the Finance Ministry in the Berlin district is trying to collect from companies that had been paying pensions to Jewish employees who are now retired the sums that up to then had been paid to these employees. Now we, the German Reich, under the ordinance of the Reichscitizenshiplaw, die 11. Verordnung, we have now the legal right to these pensions, because we are by law the successors of the Jews, and furthermore, it is a basic principle that only the Reich profits from the destruction of the Jews. There is not supposed to be a private profit from it. And what do we find? We find here a letter from the Berliner Handelsgesellschaft, which is a .. an employer in this case, and which, as one of the more forward looking employers had been having a pension system although not one that was vested in the.. in the



pensioner. They.. they have a..an oldage security and assistance society which paid these pensions to former employees. And now they are saying - and this is July 20, 1942, a rather early time - and this is the legal division of the Berliner Handelsgesellschaft writing to the Economy group of the German bankers: it is entirely out of the question that they would hand over pensions heretofore paid the Jewish employees to the German Reich. And now they are so crude as to refer to Jews who had been shoved off, "abgeschoben", and the reason, they say, is that there is not even any indication that the Jews in question are still alive. Are still alive. This is being written as early as July 1942, and quite obviously one doesn't pay pensions to dead people, and quite obviously there can be no question of transferring these pensions to the Reich, because you cannot receive a pension when you are dead. This however does not apply to the personal belongings of the people, those personal belongings certainly can be acquired by the Reich and.

Qu. .. the same story as a matter of fact that the insurance one, after the Kristallnacht.

Re. Absolutely. Except that here of course the question was more complicated. In Kristallnacht, you will remember, the Party organized a certain violence against Jewish establishments, and it's called Kristallnacht, because rocks were thrown into windows of Jewish shops. What was not calculated of course was that the buildings in which these shops were located belonged

to Aryans. The owners of these buildings were not Jews. Therefore, the windows that were broken, were windows that were the property of Germans. These windows were insured with the German insurance companies. The insurance company had to pay the German owner for the damage done. Furthermore, the difficulty now was that the glass that had been broken had been manufactured in Belgium, so that foreign currency would have to be used in a time where it was badly needed for other purposes to restore the street appearance. And the only thing that Göring could do for these poor people was to make sure that the Jews would pay for the restoration of the street appearance, thus giving the insurance company for once something that they really were not entitled to. They were not, you see, entitled to (incomprehensible). But Göring took pity on Hilgard who represented the insurance companies and even joked about it at a meeting, saying "Here I am an angel in somewhat corpulent form, rescuing you from your legal obligations," and thought that the insurance companies should be grateful for that.

Qu. Yes. He convinced him that he was.. he helped him to earn money.

Re. That's right. Well, yes, of course. But as the destruction process proceeded and went on its course, the last vestige of what the Jews owned was taken away. When Jewish apartments were closed, the furniture was taken over and was distributed

bombings began to the bombed out Germans. The furniture of Jews in Belgium, and in the Netherlands, and in France was taken hold of by Einsatzstab Rosenberg which here operated in the West, and was shipped to deserving German families bombed out etc. Incidentally, some portion of this furniture went to railroad employees in recognition of the services that the railroad were rendering in transporting the Jews under these difficult conditions. And interestingly enough, very little furniture was used from Poland, because it was in such horrible condition that it wasn't fit for Germans quite obviously. So we find that that, and also the mere fact of an apartment shortage in Germany, .. that apartment shortage had a tremendous effect on the desire of the various regional people to evacuate Jews, to shove them off, as they would say, as quickly as possible. Indeed, the apartment shortage was given as one of the main reasons for starting the deportations in Germany itself. And that's why they begin there in the fall of 1941, before there even is any killing center, before there is any place to which these people can be sent, but the apartment shortage here looms as an important motivation, and is used as a reason to shove these people off, as they say.

Qu. They need badly the flats?

Re. They already need the flats, and this is before any bombing, well actually what they need is., is .. they need space for people who had been waiting for their apartments, because the construction program was severely curtailed anyway, there was no normal

replacing of housing in the Hitler years. And therefore these few Jewish appartments were badly desired by people who wanted to move up in the world, and they used their influence to get those places, and there is a lot of correspondance of that along

Qu. Yes.

Re. In a city like Munich, for instance. Now of course, once the Jews arrive in the death camps, they just come with their few kilograms of personal belongings, but they may have gold, they may have foreign currency, they may have other things and in that last search those things are taken, and are followed through elaborately through the mechanism of banks and various other institutions for final utilization. And it gets so that the long hair of women is cut off for purposes of making necessary in submarines, you see, for firing torpedos, and it gets so that gold teeth are pulled, because gold is very valuable and is still a foreign exchange earner, and here we see the...

BOBINE 397

Cam. Vas-y.

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 15.

Re. As much as we see the efficiency of the Germans in the appropriation of Jewish property, it is interesting to note also that one basic principle throughout the process most particularly when the Final Solution began was that economic considerations

were not to interfere with the progress of the destruction process, and most particularly so with the deportations, which were frequently.. were cutting into the ghettos, cutting into the armament plans by taking away the labour literally over night. Now, there are remarkable inefficiencies which are not immediately apparent, in particular the ghetto system. It's to be observed that, whereas some of the ghettos in Poland were established as early as the end of 1939, other not until the end of 1940 or even later than that in the case of Upper Silesia. And the reason is that in each case when a ghetto is being established, a large price was paid, in production, in upsetting the entire economy of a region, in the very reruling of the traffic flow, non collection of rents, all kinds of upsetting upheaval phenomena.

Qu. You mean because of the ghettoization process?

Re. The ghettoization itself.

Qu. Yes.

Re. And then you see that with each ghetto the economy of the Jews has to be reestablished. Now, if you look inside Warsaw, you observe that in a population of more than 400,000 ghetto inhabitants not more than ten percent were employed. Now, a 90% unemployment, that is to say 90% of the people not working, although this would include children and people not capable of working, you do see eh.. a growth of inefficiency. You can't take from people that which they are not producing. And even when

in Warsaw for example the peak of efficiency at the middle of 1942 is roughly a 100 000, or barely 100 000 who are working, and that still means that at least another 100 000 capable of working are not working. It is at that peak that the Germans empty out the ghetto. Now, clearly..

Qu. The people were working for the German ..

Re. Even in- .. even in... even including that. Now, Himmler said repeatedly that he would not recognize the argument of war production. He says this in a variety of contexts, whenever it is acknowledged that the frequent movements interfere with production in one way or another. And he says he will not recognize the argument of war production in the Final Solution of the Jewish Question, he regards it as an excuse. However, it really was a cost in the destruction process of setting the gains which accrued to the Germans from various expropriations, labour exploitations and confiscations, and ultimately the cost was greater than the sum total of gains which could be registered from these various Aryanizations. The cost was greater because the relinquishment of labour in a situation of extreme labour shortage, the foregoing of the opportunity to train and employ, most especially in Eastern Europe, people who in any case were heavily concentrated in a skilled or semi-skilled labour area. That foregoing was a cost factor.

Qu. You mean..

Re. ... it belongs at the reliability ..

Qu. The Jews were the skilled workers?

Re. The Jews were skilled or semi-skilled workers as soon as you enter Poland and all the way to the Ukraine the same situation of occupational structure shows up. So that the Germans were here making quite a sacrifice. One which doesn't appear in the books, because well, they would enter meticulously every receipt in the budget, they would not enter the foregoing of labour. This is now an estimate which one can hardly make, because hardly you calculate that which was not produced. And yet we know it. Interestingly enough, the Jews themselves did not believe that the Germans would take going production disrupted, and and and simply forego the benefits of it, and that's why the Jews believed so long as they were working, they might be safe, and that was a critical error.

Qu. Yes. This was the ideology of rescue through work.

Re. Rescue through work. <sup>which, which</sup> which would apply only on the assumption that the Germans were completely rational in the original economic sense of the word. Rationality means, I maximize my gains and I minimize my losses, and the Jews thought that the Germans were completely rational in this economic sense and, of course, they were not. Which means that the Jews made a grievous error in making that assumption in the first place.

Qu. Yes, but this is a very important point, because they wanted to steel everything from the Jews..

Re. .. and yet they, in this country which was completely organized for production, which was to the nth degree to maximize

output, would nevertheless forego clear advantages and would do so consistently in the Jewish sector, most especially when the labour shortage would become critical. There might be compromises, in other words, there would be a situation of saving the Jews capable of labour until the last moment. One would make these distinctions between productive and non productive elements.

Qu. Yes.

Re. But in the end, and this is the crucial thing, Jewish labour, the labour of Jews, was not labour. In the end, it was just Jews. And this classification, the classification that a Jew is a Jew, took precedence over economic considerations. That is a crucial point throughout the destruction process, and one of its main characteristics.

Qu. Yes. And you think that this was the.. the most dangerous error of the.. of the Jews themselves.

Re. Yes it was, because it.. it applies of course to 1941, to 1942, 1943, even 1944.

Qu. In Lodz?

Re. Yes, absolutely. And in other places.

Qu. Yes.



Qu. And it's a... It's really the most difficult thing to understand because in one way, what I said, Germany was a highly industrialized country, and they had Krupp, and they had the gold teeth of the Jews.

Re. Still, you see, when you look at Krupp and the gold teeth, well it is very difficult to see the acquisition of enterprises and the acquisition of the gold from the teeth as being in the same category. It is. Because, although it seems to us now bizarre, the fact of the matter is, to the Germans both were Jewish property. The coal mines belonging to the Petscheks in the Sudetenland or in Silesia and the gold teeth extracted from Jewish corpses in Auschwitz, those were Jewish properties properly in their view, taken and booked as receipts. So, in that sense, ~~for~~ for the Germans it's in a plus column. These are assets, these are gains, these are acquisitions. The <sup>abandon renunciation</sup> relinquishment of Jewish labour on the other hand is a minus column. These are liabilities, these are losses. And it is admittedly very, very difficult for a normal human being to see this accounting system for what it was, to see the plus and the minus clearly, to recognize that to these people even.. even.. a.. a.. radio that war barely working, even a pair of binoculars that had had better days, even spectacles, even shoes, warm clothing would still be utilized. It would be cleaned, it would be disinfected, it would be distributed. X Everything was used, however small.

Qu. Yes, that's what I mean. This is, an ideology for death.

Re. This is an ideology that is in conformity with death, and this

is what these two, plus and minus, had in common, because both, both have the object finally to eliminate Jewry altogether with its property disappearing entirely.

Qu. But when you see, for instance in Auschwitz, when they gather the... the... there were crippled Jews, when they gathered all the prostheses!

Re. Of course, of course.. You see, in this.. in this regard they were totally rational. They were rational to the point of You were taking what ordinarily would not be taken. You regard even what is in the body as the 'Property of the German Reich' in accordance with the 11th or the 13th ordinance of the Reichs Citizenship Law. And indeed, when we noticed the arguments in the war crimes trials, one of these dentists, you see, was being asked: "Now, aren't you a participant in murderX by pulling these teeth?" He said: "Oh no, I mean, from the legal standpoint, the corpse floats in No Man's Land." The teeth, the gold teeth belonged to the Reich. He pulls them, and he doesn't even consider that this is particularly wrong.

Qu. Yes. But it is so contrary of what is today modern consume society. Let's take the American one, where everything is thrown away.

Re. Oh, one doesn't keep... yes, yes, yes of course. But the United States is a society of waste and.. and.. and the Germans were not. Now you have to remember that very heavy emphasize was placed through all the Hitler years upon saving everything that

could be saved. Because it was a shortage economy.

Qu. Yes.

BOBINE 398

As. Burlington, Hilberg 16

Qu. Well, I would like that we talk about that formula about the beginnings of the.. of the extermination as such. Because I'm very much against the idea that one can give birth.. engendre.. extermination from... when starting with German History, with Psychology, with Marxism, with <sup>the</sup> economic crises, with the antisemitism in general. I think that there is .. there is a gap. There comes the moment when one has to kill and to decide about the killings. And the best proof of this is that ~~xxx~~ when one goes to Poland for instance and when one talks to the former guards of the extermination camps, with the killers, at the very beginning they were not ready. If you take Belzec or Sobibor or even Treblinka, one has the feeling that they had to go at such a speed not to.. to miss the moment and everything was made in a complete disorder, at the time I know ~~and~~ there are several ideas in this , it's very difficult.

Re. Now, I as you know share the view that you just expressed, because the one question most frequently asked of me is 'Why, why, why European Jews were killed?'

Qu. This is the question..

Re. Yes. Its.. it's the question most frequently asked also because up to the point when the Jews are being concentrated you can say that the measures produced certain economic benefits to Germany.

many, but quite clearly beyond that point, the costs exceed any possible gains. So the 'why' becomes even more insistent, because even in the context of an aggressive, highly self-centered destructive machine, one cannot fully understand why this should be done. And I also would say that the fact that there may have been an ideology of propaganda does not in the least explain anything about what transpired now. And I would say this for three reasons: First of all, we find in the machinery of destruction now at that point the diverse ~~mixtures~~ <sup>sectors</sup> of German society, not all of whom were in the very center of that ideology or highly propagandaized in Nazi thought, even assuming that the SS was, and that's a big assumption to make. But, in addition to that consideration, there were two others. And one of them is that the blueprint is missing, the plan is missing, the goal is not in view, although it inevitably springs up out of the actions. And third, there is a hesitation. Now, there is almost a year where there is great uncertainty, when one considers last minute possibilities of sending the Jews here, there or the other place, and then the territorial solution emerges. Inevitably, as the consequence of everything else either having failed or the point having been reached where this is the only possible continuation. It is in an interim period, a period extending from the second half of 1940 to the second half of 1941, that we face the... the deep, unfathomable mystery of a emergence of the Final Solution.

Qu. Yes.

Re. Which, which, which is not the product of a single brain which is not the product of a plan, which is not the product as a matter of fact, of any agency or any one agency.

Qu. Which is not even the product of an order.

Re. No it is not. And we see here what has sometimes been called a meeting of minds. We see it in the Final Solution Conference on January 20, 1942. We see people gathering, who without even saying things all that explicitly seem to know. Each knows what the other is talking about. Each comes to this meeting with great expectations. The.. the tension is revealed even in the many drafts that this final summary must have gone through in that final version of .. of the talks as prepared by Eichmann. And the tension shows through .. this was a moment of History and the participants knew it. They knew it in the field, and they knew it in Berlin. And they knew it whenever they corresponded or talked to one other about it. And they moved into it, with a certain confusion at first, with even cares in the field but soon enough, with the goal very clearly outlined in their minds, and now everything wafted, and everything produced a well-oiled process on the assembly line. But many steps.. one had to go through.

Qu. Is it possible to say two apparently contradictory things: that the extermination is included in the first anti-jewish bureaucratic step, which is taken let's say 1933, How is the extermination included in the step, and how is the extermination not included?

Re. I would say this: It is not included in the sense that there was then no blue-print, no plan, no articulated goal. It was still the old goal of expulsion, of emigration and so on. But it was ~~included~~ included, because the momentum and the inertia of this process, its expansion all over Europe, the fact of the German

march East and West, North and South, would make it impossible for the traditional road, that of emigration, to be followed. Therefore there was incandescence at the very beginning, in the relentlessness, in the intensity of these rather draconian measures, to use a term that the Nazis used, the inevitable consequence that they themselves would not have identified with, that they themselves would not have talked about in 1933. But it was in a sense built in to the crosses from the beginning. Because if one is going to move in that direction, if one is going to occupy all Europe, if one is going to have a World War and if one is going to do all of these things in a single space of time, ten years, twelve years, what.. what are you going to do with the Jewish population? As one German SS major said in the Lodz ghetto in the middle of 1941: "We can't very well spend another winter here and let them starve to death. That would not be sehr angenehm. We would have to find some device that would be humane and that will do the job." And it is in that sense, in the words of this one major, that one sees the inevitability of the process reaching that conclusion.

Qu. It became easier for them..

Re. It became the inevitable, because there were no other ways. You see, the only thing they then could have done in 1941 was to stop all together. And that is the one thing they could not do.

Qu. What do you mean altogether?

Re. Well, take for example the situation of ghettos having been

the day of Barbarossa, the day of the march into the Soviet Union. Which is the beginning of the active killing phase. Up till June 21st, you might say there was one option: the option to go ahead or the option to stop. But consider for a minute what this movement this philosophy, if you like, really was, what it called itself. It called itself Bewegung. It was the opposite of something that would be stationary. It couldn't. Were it to stop, it wouldn't be Nazi. It .. it .. it would not be that. And it could not visualize itself as stopping. That isn't to say that it could easily visualize going ahead either, and the contradiction in that sense is built in. I refer again and again to and again to the point that if one were to have talked about it openly, it would have been impossible to do. And if one was going to do it, one couldn't talk about it.

Qu. Yes. But this is very interesting. You mean that it's because they conquer all Europe, that there was no possibility for them to let the Jews emigrate? Because there was no territory any more?

Rs. Well, there was no territory as they saw it. Certainly, when they looked in the Soviet Union, the whole idea in Barbarossa is for that matter.. is as vague as to what to do with the Soviet Union as it is when they begin the assault upon Jewry in 1933. There is this similar vagueness, and this similar lack of any compromise in the attack of the Soviet Union. There is a remarkable similarity here, in the very nature of Barbarossa, an open ended assault. Not only is there no *ultimatum* to the Soviets, no warning, no conditions, but there isn't any definite plan as to where the German Army was going to stop. There is no envisaging of

any peace treaty. There is no clear cut view of what is to be done with that population once it is conquered. And it is in that context that the first killings begin.

BOBINE 399

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 17

Re. The Final Solution cannot be divorced from the war. It took place in the midst of war, and actually it begins on the very day that the German Army is crossing into Russia, on June 22nd, 1941. There are a number of factors to be considered in this attack, because curiously, there are strong resemblances between the German planning against the Soviet Union and their measures against the Jews in the Final Solution. In both cases, they don't really come to grips, that the outset with what it is they are going to do at the end. Barbarossa, which is the code name of the German assault upon the Soviet Union, appears in German records very early. Amazingly enough, I have traced it in the diary of Colonel General Harder to July 22nd, 1940, at the time when they were still bombing England. They were already then talking about the assault upon the Soviet Union, a country with which they had good relations at that moment. They were preparing this assault without any indications of where it was going to take them. There is no ultimatum, there are no conditions, the attack is a surprise attack. There is no indication of where the German Armies were going to stop, whether on Ural mountains, or somewhat farther West, or wherever.

Qu. Farther East!

Re. Perhaps East. There is absolutely no planning really at the



moment as to what is to be done with the population, that is to say the Russian population, White Russian population, and so on. But there is one thing, which already one can notice in the correspondence going back at.. to March certainly of 1941. Now March, March is a month during which the planning is already far advanced. One has already got a clear picture of Army Group North, Army Group Center, Army Group South. the Allied forces that are going to be employed, the 11th Army stationed in the extreme South. And it is inside this planing mechanism, in the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, which is the High Command of the Armed Forces, in a Wehrmacht Führungsstab, which is the main center for planning wars at that moment, and within that Abteilung Landesverteidigung of the General Warlimont, which is of course the operational staff of the Armed Forces, that we see the first indication that special units of the SS and Police, that is to say of the Security Police, of the Security Service. are going to operate on their own responsibility within the context of the invasion, They are going to move with the Armies, were to undertake certain measures. And here we begin with the Einsatzgruppen. These of course were the units in the field, moving, mobile, of one main office of the SS and Police, the Reichs Security Main Office, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, at that time under Reinhard Heydrich. So already in March, provision is made by the Armed Forces for the Operation of Einsatzgruppen with those Armed Forces. They are to move with them, they are to move in the same direction, and they are going to carry out certain tasks. The tasks in a nutshell consist in the ~~x~~ killing of the Jews, as many as possible,

as rapidly as possible, in order that the maximum surprise should be utilized in the course of this presumably rapid advance that was going to begin. Now: June 22nd is the day, and within a few days thereafter Jews are dying in front of German guns fired by the Einsatzgruppen. And the Final Solution now has begun for the area East, East of German dominated Europe as of June 22nd.

Qu. East of Poland?

Re. East of Poland. Well, within Poland, so far as Bialystok, and Gruz and certain other cities are concerned. And by.. by.. by July we see these Einsatzgruppen moving northward into the Baltic States. We see them fanning out even as the German Armies fan out, we see them moving on the road to Minsk, to Smolensk, we see them moving into Kiev, we see them moving in the extreme South towards the Crimea, where they already ~~are~~ operate by December. At Christmas, they are shooting the Jews of the Crimean capital, so that Christmas may be celebrated there without Jews. And this operation, which in a few months resulted in the death of at least a half million Jews, was the opening. At this point however, there is as yet no clear.. clear idea of what to do with the Jews in the rest of Europe. Now, as of June 22nd, 1941, there simply is no document that can fairly be described as an order to annihilate the Jews of Europe.

Qu. But when one talks with the people of the Einsatzgruppen, - I did this -, they all refer to.. with the chiefs, I mean, of the Einsatzgruppen, of the units.. they all refer to a so called Führerbefehl, this means Führer order. And when one asks what

was this Führer order, what was the content of this, they seem to be unable to answer. Really.

Re. They seem to be unable to answer it because, unlike..

Qu. Excuse me, it was not a written one.

Re. Ah, yes! Because I was just going to say, unlike the.. the orders of Adolf Hitler with respect to the invasion of the Soviet Union, directives, Weisungen, which were in writing. What we do not have for the Final Solution is a written document signed by Hitler himself. So all of these Führer directives, Führer wishes, Führer orders, are inferred from things that he must have said. Perhaps he said them to Göring, perhaps he said them to Himmler, perhaps he said them to someone else. Evidently, he said them several times and in several contexts, but not necessarily clearly. So, here we are in this situation which is so typical of the Nazi regime but is not well understood outside the narrow circle of participants who know it well, and that is, that so much of what is assumed to be a basic directive and a basic structure is rather amorphous, and that words are spoken and interpreted and used and employed in accordance with the understanding of those words by those who listen, or even those who are one step removed from those who have listened to them. And this is the reason, the Historians to this very day are asking everyone: "What was your understanding of this or that other conversation?" And we know that the.. the so called Befehl, the so called order under which the Einsatzgruppen moved out was, to say the least, vague. What document, any document can you point to that would say "Allright?"

the primary objective of these Einsatzgruppen was the outset the Final Solution." We see this from what they did. We could not infer it from written documents, written before they moved into Russia. So here we have an example, perhaps a very crude example, that the system operated on understanding. Not on prescriptions. We now know that prescriptions can be written and ignored. Prescriptions are useless if they are not followed. But understandings, once they exist, can utilize any words, spoken or even unspoken, to achieve a goal. And those people had an understanding of what they were supposed to do.

Qu. Yes. You have used the word Führer wish.

Re. Führerwish.

Qu. Yes, and I think this is very.. very important, no?

Re. Yes, it is important because we see so many letters,.. just think of the letters that were sent out by Bormann, "The Führer wishes.." Now, that's the language that he uses. Why does he use it? Because probably he heard the Führer say it in some context or other in a conversation. And the Führer may have said something offhandedly, but whatever he may have said is now a Führerwish.

Qu. Yes. But this leads to the.. what I call myself the general activism of these people.

Re. Oh yes. They were active. They were active. They were moving. They understand. Once of course the operation in the East have

gun, there is a very important document.

Qu. One could say.. excuse me.. one could say that the Final Solution was a product of everybody.

Re. It is the product of everybody, and it could not possibly have been manufactured by a single person. Imagine anyone, even Hitler saying, there shall now be a Final Solution and it shall consist of such and such, quite apart of the impossibility of such things being put into words. Can you imagine a normal society, one in which people are used to ordinary things, do those things which are moral and not those things which are immoral, taking such a letter and taking it seriously? No, that's impossible. And for that reason such a letter doesn't exist. Such an order doesn't exist. Such a directive isn't spelt out. Instead, it's the inferred.. the inferred business. They 'd notion that something is now right ripe, it's a ~~heretian~~ <sup>heretian</sup> notion, something is ripe for the time. Only these are not world historical leaders of the kind that Hegel ...

Qu. That's...

Re. We..-

BOBINE 400

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 18

Re. When we deal with the period of 1940 to 1941, we observe a great many bureaucrats beginning to innovate and experiment at least in thought with what was to be done. It is as though each was in a hegelian sense an interpreter of History and trying to do that which was ripe for the time. They all became improvisers and inno

vators.

Qu. Pioniers!

Re. And pionniers. I think that some of the results were built into the ghetto system. Because when you look at the winter, from 1940 to 1941, which is the first winter, when ghettos are established except in a few spaces in Poland, where in short they cut up them the food supply. And where the rationing system decided as such that people don't have enough to eat, the average being perhaps 1100 to 1200 calories. There we see that it's the beginning of the end inside the walls of fences of those ghettos. Because even a black market trade is ultimately not going to provide for the survival of those inside. They are trading after all possessions, and once these possessions are gone, they have nothing more to trade with. So you find a very significant letter by an SS major whose name is Rolf Heinz Höppner. It was sent on July 16, 1941, that is to say less than a month after the assault upon the Soviet Union, when the Einsatzgruppen operations had begun. And it was addressed to his comrade in Berlin, Eichmann, which is specially significant. Here is a letter from one SS major to another. Two people that knew each other. And thus it is a very canted document. And he is writing more or less informally, but including a memorandum of the same date of discussions that were held inside Lodz, pertaining to a Solution of the Jewish Question, eine Lösung. Here is that word, Lösung, solution. Now what was it a solution to? The answer was in a first instance the conditions inside the Lodz ghetto and other surrounding letters of this so called Wartheland, which was the province in which the second largest ghetto of Poland was located. And the condi-

tions of starvation which were beginning to emerge, which already had emerged in the last winter. And now he addresses himself in one point, point 4 of the memorandum, to the following: this winter, meaning the winter coming up from 1941 to 1942, there is a danger that not all of the Jews can be fed any more. Now, let us stop right here and consider the sentence. It is the Germans in the first place who institute the rationing system, they can always increase it. But it is now a given that the rationing system will not be increased, because the Germans never regress. The Germans once having tightened the screw are not going to untighten it. So there is now called a danger that not all of the Jews can be fed any more. "One should weigh honestly if the most humane solution might not be to finish off those of the Jews who are not employable by means of some quick working device." And any rate, that "would be more pleasant" - angenehm - "than to let them starve to death." The Final Solution in this man's mind or in the conferees who met and which produced this particular document was that it would be more humane to use a gas van at least for those Jews who were not capable of working and therefore not deserving of any food whatsoever. That it was really the only logical, rational and in that context expectable thing to do. And he writes this letter on July 16, which happens to be just two weeks before Göring sends his Final Solution directive or authorization to Heydrich. That is how close in a point of time these two documents appear. As 18 minds were working in a same direction, in Poznan, and in Berlin. And indeed this is what is happening, they are working in the same direction. They all look -

Qu. They worked together.

Re. They work not necessarily together, but they work on the same premisses, and they come to the same conclusions. And so it is, that when Göring sends his letter to Heydrich, authorizing him to start the preparations for a Final Solution, that quite naturally the first thought is 'Let us take the Jews first off the Reich, off the Protektorat Böhemia and Moravia, and let us ship them out into the area which is now the scene of operations of the Einsatzgruppen, because there we have our eingearbeitete Einsatzgruppen who already know what to do, and that which they have done to the Lithuanian Jews, the Russian Jews, they can also do to the new transports, which we shall send them.' So the first thought indeed is to send Jews to Riga, to Minsk and to Kaunas.

Qu. Were the Einsatzgruppen were already..

Re. Were the Einsatzgruppen were operating, where they already operate. And most especially so, because they have the experience, they have the know-how, and they will do it. And that's at the point at which the transports begin to roll, in the fall of 1941, before there is a single camp in existence.

Qu. And that's what actually happened. Because they killed the German Jews in Kovno. ~~xxxx~~

Re. Yes, they did. As a matter of fact, we have of course one extremely rare document, a report from the field of Ek 3, which was commanded by Standartenführer Jäger. And here we have in this extraordinary report the numbers of Jews killed in each locality that that particular Kommando was operating in for several months. And significantly, we see with



entry, that for Kovno Fort 9, Kaunas Fort 9, the 25th of November and the 29th of November, 1941. These are the first killings of Jews outside of Russia. The first Jews coming from Germany. Settlers from Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt am Main. The total killed on the 25th from those three cities: 2954. Then settlers from Vienna and from Bratslav - the total killed, obviously a rounded figure, 2000. Together 5000 Jews killed in November.

Qu. In November 1941.. and Jews of the Reich.

Re. 1941.. and this is significant. These are Jews from the Reich. So therefore the Final Solution has now encompassed not only Jews found in the territories East of the line which existed on June 22nd, but already it has become European. Already it has taken victims from the West. And this is the beginning of .. in November, the end of November. But - it is not yet the point at which this idea is accepted or acceptable. The people in the East, the Gebietskommissare, the Stadtkommissare, the people in charge of these ruined cities cannot.. cannot understand what is happening. And they have a vision of tens of thousands of Jews, of hundreds of thousands of Jews arriving in these ruins for them to do the job, and they protested. They protested from White Russia and they protested perhaps from other places.

Qu. We know that they protested from Poland.

Re. They protest from everywhere. Because.. not because they are opposed to killing, but because they are uncertain as to how many Jews they will receive and they are afraid of the number of

demics, they are afraid of the overflow, they are afraid of what is going to happen to the general population, including even German occupation personal. They.. they.. they are surprised by this sudden influx. They don't know how to handle it, they haven't made provision for it. And significantly enough, from Hitler's own headquarters we see a line, a single line, written by Heinrich Himmler in his own handwriting on the 30th of November, that is to say after these initial killings have taken place with regard to yet another transport that has left Berlin or is about to leave Berlin, and the two words are: "Keine Liquidierung!" No liquidation of this particular transport. How remarkable for Hitler himself, to have made such a concession. Clearly the bureaucracy is now überhaspelt, the bureaucracy now cannot absorb, cannot carry out, cannot cope with a sudden movement which may be hundreds of thousands, which could be millions, and which obviously is going to burden a few thousand people in the field. And from that moment..

Qu. .. they have to invent something else.

Re. They have to invent something else. And the first thing of course that they invent is still provided by that same office, the Reichs Security Main Office, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt. That's the gas van. The gas van which is.. is a simple van, holding 70 people at a maximum, with the carbon monoxide exhaust inside the van, and in which ..they already had produced some for the Einsatzgruppen.. the women and the children were being killed, so that the sensibilités of.. of the Einsatzgruppen per-

sonal, who, it must be remembered, were a little..

Qu. Seelische Belastung..

Re. Die seelische Belastung.

BOBINE 401

Ass. Burlington. Hilberg 19

Qu. It is the madness.

Re. There was a period in 1940, at the end of 1940 the beginning of 1941 of virtual chaos inside Poland, in spite the outward appearance of calm and .. the structuring being.. the fact is that quite a few especially of the Stadthauptmänner, the German commanders of the cities, thought that the time had come for their particular areas to be judenrein, free of Jews. And they began ejecting them..

Qu. From their own will?

Re. From their own area. Krakow is the most famous example, because Frank himself, the Generalgouverneur wanted Krakow to be free of Jews, but there were other areas, which had miniature deportations, short distances, from cities into the countryside, not just the other way round. And there might be unannounced transports coming in in one small town or another. And frantic phone calls and Fernschreiben of various kinds from the Kreishauptmann on the scene, asking 'What do you think this is? This is a small town! Are you solving your welfare problems by dumping these people on our doorstep? We already have a density of six per room or more than that, in one case 20 per room.'

Qu. Jews?

HILBERG 84

coming about especially in wintertime without control ability, no medical services especially in the country side must being emphasized. But of course from the standpoint of the higher up Germans, a gouverneur, and a general gouverneur, somebody in Berlin, these were not urgently critical things.

Qu. This means that everyone was trying his own..

Re. There was... there was.. there was, you see, there was a tendency in Poland, and this is obvious to me now, after studying the monthly reports of Kreishauptmänner, which is a task which at the beginning I thought wasn't going to be very fruitful, but now reading these reports, I can see there was a tendency within a number of places, an uncoordinated activity resulting in miniature solutions. Not of killing people as yet, for there was no organized killing, but of pushing them out. Now what you have got there is a limited space, with people being pushed this way and that. This was of course..

Qu. .. turning in circle.

Re. Now, virtually, as you.. as you push people from one direction from here to there, they are denser here than they were there. Then they might be pushed back. Indeed this whole business of first making the incorporated territories free of Jews and then making the Reich itself free of Jews always closed and language indicating that this was temporary, indeed the ghettos themselves were temporary. All of this led to an expectancy, an anticipation, that there had to be a Final Solution, because, clearly

HILBERG 85

a temporary solution required yet another solution. And it wasn't going to lead to anything, whether you have a reservat, or whether you have some other kind of arrangement. And this is also why you see for example in the.. in the Lodz ghetto a.. a particular problem, and similarly so in Minsk. Very, very great protests. In those two cities, once the Reichs Jews are being sent out, beginning of course in the very early fall of 1941 to these places. And the protest is: 'What are you doing!' The vision is of tens of thousands and of hundreds of thousands of people arriving.

Qu. In already overcrowded ghettos.

Re. In already overcrowded ghettos. And this is why you find in the.. in the collection, in the Library of Congress, the Himmler files, so called, an extensive correspondence by Regierungspräsident Überhoer and the German Oberbürgermeister there, Ventzky, protesting the projected arrival of a very large number of Reichs Jews. Now you have to keep in mind that when Himmler for example is talking about 60 000 or so Jews being sent to this one ghetto, he is in effect thinking about sending 20, 25 % of the entire pop.. Jewish population of the Reich just to this one place. Now this is a place in which already there are some 200 000 Jews in 4 square km, which is a rather small territory. Now, as soon as Überhoer is.. is.. is aware of this, hears about it, he says: 'Why don't you send them to Warsaw? My information, based on the Illustrated News Papers that I read, is that they still have entertainment in the Warsaw ghetto. So that means they certainly have -

over there.' Now, the Warsaw ghetto housed 400 000 Jews in one and a half square mile. In other words, a territory no larger than the Lodz ghetto with already twice the population. Well, the upshot of it is that a compromise is being made and 20 000 Jews and 5000 Gypsies arrive. With..

Qu. Excuse.. excuse me. But in the idea of the bureaucrats of Berlin this was a.. the ghettos were like a transit.

Re. Absolutely, absolutely. In other words, the promises in a sense excited by the Regierungspräsident or by the mayor, the promises excited that this is not going to be a permanent state of affairs, because there is a danger of epidemics, flies, all kinds of things happening from the sudden influx of people, with waste disposal problems. You have to remember, these are cities. There are municipal officials, there are health officials, there are sanitation officials, there are traffic officials, who say: 'We can't handle this.' They are now thinking in terms of operational problems. 'We cannot guarantee the safety, the health of the people, if so many suddenly arrive in the midst of what is already a strained situation.'

Qu. Not only of the people of the ghetto, but also the general population.

Re. Well, you can't separate it out. Because.. because.. because once you have an epidemic, the bugs that cause it do not ask are you Polish, German or Jewish. And this they know, and this they act upon, and this they resent and object to. And therefore they expect a promise and get it, that those Jews, who will be arriving in 1944

they'll move farther to the East, which is that very, very vague, vague term, that begins to show up more and more and more. The Ostwanderung, nach dem Osten. And it's unclear of course what the East is. It's not specified, and for reason nobody knows. Nobody knows in September what the East means the following spring. Nobody has to think the study of what the East means.

Qu. It is the place of end... absolute undetermination.

Re. Completely undetermined. Now, as it happened... as it happened, Lodz got its relief very quickly, by December we have the first real killing center in operation, the gas vans operated in Kulmhof.

Qu. Chelmno.

Re. Chelmno. Death camp. And from there, the Jews are being.. Jews are being sent from Lodz, from the surrounding Warthegau ghettos to this one camp, to be gassed, so that by spring there are already many dead.

Qu. Yes. This means that there is a.. an extraordinary acceleration of the process.

Re. The.. the acceleration... the acceleration of History is such that we sit here, many decades afterwards, talking about each month, each week and each day as critical, as a turning point. Because very seldom are there events of such magnitude that happen in such a short space of time. This was such a time, they happened then.

Qu. Yes. But I was so struck when I was in Chelmno to think.. when I started to think that between the Evian conference in 1938 and

HILBERG 88

the first gassing.. gassing with the gas vans in Chelmo there is hardly three years, which are fast.

Re. There are three years, there are hardly three years, and one may add to that that by 1944, when the Germans enter Hungary, still finding a Jewish population intact, the Hungarian Jews begin to be gassed barely three months afterwards. So the period elapsing from almost complete normalcy to death is not even 90 days. And that is yet another acceleration and shows the manner in which the destruction process not only picks up speed, but also how efficiency is growing as the structure is in place and the expectations are firmed up and everyone knows what is to be done. there is no more..

Qu. Yes, in 1944..

Re. Absolutely, by then it is.. by then it is.. But in 1940, in 1941, that was the period of experimentation. And that was the point at which transports seemed to be moving almost aimlessly, just in a rather general direction: the East. Now of course, for Heydrich in the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, it is clear what the East means in a narrow sense. It means the area in which he has his Einsatzgruppen who are already killing Jews in Russia. It is the area where the Einsatzgruppen have been exceptionally active, and that means, Latvia, Lithuania, White Russia.

Qu. Ukraine..

Re. Also the Ukraine, except there are no Jews going there from Germany.



HILBERG 89

about 500,000 going to Riga and Minsk, they were fewer, but as we have seen, they do arrive, beginning in November, and in December in all of those places. And of course there were protests, there too: 'We don't want them.' But they arrive. Finally of course one realized that this is not...

Qu. That this is not?

BOBINE 402

Ass. Burlington, Hilberg 20

Qu. When they shipped the Reich Jews to the East, to Riga, to Minsk, to Kovno, on the territories where the Einsatzgruppen are operating, in order to have them killed by the Einsatzgruppen, and they just kill a certain number, except in Minsk, which is a special case, and - why do they change?

Re. Well, in general the continuous killing was beginning to show some psychological effects on members of the Einsatzgruppen. You must remember, they were not 18 years old, they were not 19 years old, they were generally a little bit above the average age of SS personnel, not fit for frontline duty, but fit for this particular task. In other words, a large percentage of them already had wives and children, and the continuous killing of whole families was beginning to have a psychological effect on them, seelische Belastung, as they would say. And therefore, already quite early during the killings, the Reichsicherheitshauptamt, the Reich Security Main Office, constructed a gas van for this specific purpose of permitting the killing of women and children to take place in a manner that would not directly involve these people.

Qu. You think it is the reason why the gas vans.. the gas vans were constructed?

Re. I'm quite shre that that is the reason, because the capacity of them was limited, about 70 people at the x most would be placed inside such a van, and they were usdd, especially at the beginning, exclusively for women and ahildren. Indeed that was also their use in Serbia, where the German army would be shooting the entire Jewish male population, that refused to dirty its hands with the killing of women and children.

Qu. You mean the Werhmacht?

Re. That's right. The Wehrmacht, the Wehrmacht. So we have the gas van turning up in the Ukraine, in various parts of the occupied Soviet Union, we find them turning up outside of Belgrade, and now third they turn up near Lodz, and they form the nucleus and the center of the first operating real killing center, that is to say Chelmno.

Qu. Could you.. could you talk a little bit more about these psychological side effects of the masx killings by the Einsatzgruppen, the.. the so called Seelische Belastung.

Re. We know generally about this effect because it appears in the documents and there is a rather famous incident in which we find Himmler himself visiting Mansk and wishing to be shown a typical operation, as they called it, and virtually becoming sick of the sight of it. One of the generals who was with him, Obergruppenführer von dem Bach-Zelewski, then said to him: 'Now, Reichsführer, these were only a hundred.' And Himmler answers: 'Well, what do

you mean by that statement?' Whereupon von dem Bach said: 'Look what is happening to your men! They either become Nervenkrankes or Rohlinge, they either.. are either to have a nervous breakdowns, or they are going to become savages.' Himmler was quite affected by that statement, and he marked it a truck and delivered his famous darwinian speech to the Einsatzgruppenpersonal in which he said: 'Yes, it is true. Every living thing has a purpose in life, including the bedbug. But this does not mean that man does not defend himself against the bedbug.' And what these people were supposed to do was of course defending the German nation from this particular parasitical form of life. However, the import of what had transpired in Minsk and in other places was not lost on the SS, and they did begin to look for a means which would be less direct, which would eliminate the face to face confrontation between perpetrator and victim. Because that constituted a burden, a psychological burden, which would be hard to cope with. And that's one of the reasons at least for the enclosures, the curbs, the chambers being constructed

Qu. Who.. who was the first to get the.. to invent the idea of the.. of the gas vans?

Re. This was the technical Referat of the Reichs Security Main Office, these were ingeniers in that technical division, people like Rauff, R-a-u-f-f, who subsequently disappeared in South America..

Qu. He is still alive?

Re. Yes, yes. And.. and this was a modest contribution of theirs in an interim phase of the killing operations between shootings

Russian we find it in Belgrade and we find it also for the Jews of the Warthegau, Lodz and surroundings.

Qu. At Chelmno!

Re. Chelmno, that's right. We find it there. And this is the one place where the vans are stationary and operate for a while, as they do in fact also at Semblin, outside of Belgrade.

Qu. But it's in the.. they had problems with the gas vans too.

Re. They had problems, yes. They had problems.

Qu. Because there is a correspondence between a.. one of the ingeniers, Becker, and the people who were operating the gas vans, in where he instructs them how to.. how to use.

Qu. Well, it was a new piece of machinery, as far as this goes. It may not have been working perfectly and you can imagine the mess if the job wasn't done properly. But on the whole I.. I think it did work, in spite of problems and yet its capacity was insufficient for the larger Final Solution of the Jewish Question, which ultimately must involve millions of people. So you kill 70 at a time, and you have to motor for at least 20 minutes to do the job.

Qu. Do you think that the.. the seelische Belastung was the only reason why they couldn't use the Einsatzgruppen in order to solve the Jewish question as a whole, I mean the Final Solution to kill the Jews from the West, from everywhere, from every place?

Re. I think there was another.. were several other considerations. One of them was transport. You have to consider that the farther East the Jews were going to be transported, the

greater the costs. We know that transport was a consideration because at one point, there is correspondence about establishing a death camp on French occupied territory, in Alsace-Lorraine with the view of just reducing the cost of transporting Jews to their final destination. And certainly for instance the selection of Auschwitz had ~~to~~ a great deal to do with the fact that a camp was going to be located near a railway junction. And, for that I think we have to owe the existence of these camps in an accessible area, not too costly for transport purposes. So there are various considerations. There were administrative considerations as well, you know. With whom was this task to be entrusted. What were the problems going to be of housing people upon arrival. By housing I don't mean anything fancy, but the usual difficulty encountered in the various ghettos when transports arrived unannounced, and density rose sharply and people were starving or otherwise frozen on the streets. That had to be taken care of, administratively, and that required camp construction.

Qu. Yes. This means that this was already too heavy for...

Re. That's correct. It was too much .. the.. you have to remember. All.. all four Einsatzgruppen total 3000 men, all four. That's all. So even ~~if~~ if we add the native collaborators, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Ukrainians, it still was not sufficient. And the camp structure, I think, was an answer. There was yet a third reason, which I think should be mentioned

HILBERG 94

and that is, that Einsatzgruppen operations by definition were in the open, there were all sorts of people present, unauthorized people, army people, who were taking photographs or at least observed these proceedings and wrote home about them. We know that this happened, because there was correspondence regarding censorship and the need to undercut the flow of information. In fact the... the German nation first discovered the fact of the final solution from these reports. They are so numerous, and they come to so many different parts of Germany, that we have Domprobst Lichtenberg in Berlin already in 1941 talking about rather openly in a sermon, in the fall of 1941, about this. And he is doing this in the Saint Hedwig's Cathedral. And how, and why is he doing it? Because he knows about it. This is the first reason. He knows about it. He knows about it from an information flow that is simply unstoppable. Everybody sees it, everybody observes it, everybody is writing home about it, and from that standpoint it was much too much in the open. It was called "theatrical", it was theater, and that had to be stopped. So an enclosure was absolutely essential. Some sort of secrecy.

Qu. At this stage there were no secrecy at all.

Re. I.. I think.. I think.. no, I think it was very much in the open, I think even Swiss ambulance drivers were aware of it, so that even in Switzerland this news was received it was much, much, much too open. In a sense of course, what they were doing, is, they were closing the door after the information that had got out. But all the same, they went ahead and, progressively, imposed more and more secrecy, not very successfully, but more

Qu. Yes, this is a very interesting point, how is.. the secrecy comes suddenly into.. into the picture.

Re. Well, the secrecy..

Qu. Because it is a false secrecy too.

Re. It's a false secrecy, but you see, it doesn't have to be. It doesn't have to be complete. I think that the first and foremost operational reason for secrecy was, that the victim should not know what is happening to him.

BOBINE 403

Burlington, Hilberg 21

Qu. Well, this question of secrecy, is very, very difficult. Because you say that in Russia they killed the Jews in the open. Everybody know it. The Russians themselves and the soldiers of the Wehrmacht. Okay, and in Poland they built the killing centers. There is no secrecy at all in Poland. Because they don't hide themselves from the Poles. all the Poles know what is going on. just as they know about the ghetto. And when the killing centers start to operate, whether it is Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, all the Poles of the villages around, they know absolutely everything. They see, they hear, they smell. And one has the feeling, that the Germans don't care at all about the fact that the Poles know. It is not their problem. Well, we have this fact. We have a second fact that it seems to be true that in Germany they have to keep the .. the secrecy. The actual killers are Geheimnisträger, this means they carry a secret and they are not supposed to talk about this, about what is going on, what they are doing, but it seems to be a complete fake, because euh.. euh.. there are I don't know how many

millions of Poles who know everything, and there are even soldiers of the Wehrmacht who are passing near the extermination sites, because extermination<sup>a</sup> sites are built near the railways trucks.

Re. We tend to think of secrecy as something that either is a fact kept locked up from all those who are not supposed to know, or else, once the door is open a track, the information flows out like a gas and permeates all Europe. We tend to think in those ways. We believe that something either is or is not a secret. We don't stop to think that something can be a secret and yet be known by a large number of people. That it is a quantitative problem. That it is a problem of the degree of knowledge, and that it is a problem of the degree to which the knowledge is being believed. Now, you have to remember that the twofold reason for secrecy was, in a first instance, that the more information would be freely circulating about these killings, the more questions might arise about conscience, about morality. So, the talk itself was out of bounds. And this is the reason also why in secret correspondence, where one knowing perpetrator writes to another knowing perpetrator, there is still no mention, specifically, of killings. It's always W "die Juden sind hier abgewandert" or "Sonderbehandelt geworden" or something of this kind. There is a... a... a euphemistical language being employed, rather than the direct word, and this happens even between people who know what is going on. So that's... here we see the psychological function.

Qu. This is secrecy in their own eyes, for their own..

Re. Yeah.. this.. that's correct. But ~~now~~ though there is a second factor. The Jews must not be allowed to believe what is going to



happen to them. & In other words, if you have it out in the open if you tell the Jews what is going to happen, then what on earth could you expect from the prospective victims. Are they going to allow themselves to be led to slaughter? And here we have a very interesting situation: we have a tendency on the part of certain German personnel not only not to keep the secret from other Germans, where it goes without saying that the subject of the destruction of the Jews was being talked about in the foreign Office in Embassies, and legations as far south as Rome, let's say, that it was talked about in the open environment of a dining car on some railroad going from Warsaw to Berlin, that it was talked about in a variety of places where you would not expect such conversations to take place. But even more so, it was talked about by perpetrators to the victims themselves. You find it in the diary of Adam Czerniakow. You find that he hears strange information from the very people he's dealing with, from Germans. He hears not direct words, nothing specific, but he hears enough to worry. We have a strange report that was received in Geneva from an unknown source, but during the war, where somebody was expected to a killing operation somewhere in the Ukraine, who was within listening distance, and who said that he actually heard a German officer, presumably an SS officer, explain to the Jews just about to be killed why it is that they had to pay with their lives, with their lives, mind you, for what Jewry had done. In other words, here he is giving the victims an explanation. And then we have a document like this, which is itself very interesting. It comes from Günther, who is Eichmann's deputy, and it goes to the various security police

personal in France, Netherlands and Belgium, as well as to Me April 29, 1943, that's not so early. Immediate concern has been to get the Jews to camp Auschwitz to renew a request the Jews about to be evacuated receive no disturbing revelations of any kind about the place or manner of the utilization which is in store for them. In particular I should ask you to take pains to instruct the accompanying guards before every journey not to instill fears of resistance in the Jews by voicing in their presence suppositions about types of quarters etc. Auschwitz is most desirous in need of urgent construction programs, the receipt of the transports and their future distribution may be carried out as smoothly as possible. Now you see another purpose of the secrecy. The Jews are not to receive information, most especially not..

Burlington, Hilberg 22

Re. We see in this kind of correspondence the insistence upon secrecy for the reason that the smoothness of the operation is dependant upon Jews not becoming anxious about the mode of what is going to happen to them upon arrival. They are to be kept quiet for efficiency purposes, for the avoidance of any resistance, for unexpected events not to happen. Now it is very curious in a certain sense, because I think that the Germans themselves had to assume that the Jewish communities in places like France, Belgium or Holland would already have had suspicions about any destination unannounced, of any death train that they might be boarding. Nevertheless, the Jews were capable of talking themselves into a state of quiescence, of hoping that the final destination would be some work ukrainian farm, that they would have to perform forced labour perhaps, but not be killed. And therefore, it was simply a matter of reinforcing the hope, and not

the opposite, not the anxiety. So we see now secrecy as having another significance.. This is.. it's not an either - or proposition at all, it's a question of giving enough secrecy, so that people would be capable of reinforcing those of their feelings of those of their suppositions which would be useful to the Germans. And that would be the main reason. Now of course ~~the~~ beyond the in general the problem was not to broadcast and not to allow the entire world to know while the operation was going on, that it was happening. Because again we have to see that all these trains moving into a single direction to what after all were just a few destinations. And at the very least Auschwitz and the other administrations of these camps had to think about break out attempts and air raids. Those of course, those camps were by definition bombings. The destruction of four or five of them would have answered the destruction process right there. Thus it became somewhat essential to keep the operation sufficiently secret to ~~a~~ <sup>some</sup> ~~is~~ enough doubt, if there was doubt as to what was going on, so that people would not make it a concerted effort to destroy the perpetration right there.

Qu. Yes, but what is the.. what is the most striking fact, I always ask this to myself, is in the amount of information which was flown during these years.. or is it the amount of silence?

Re. In what sense silence?

Qu. The very fact that there were.. there was so much information that the silence, I mean the fact that they didn't know, that the things were not known and that.. okay, many people say "We didn't know anything!", or "We knew very late.", and so on. And even when they knew and they got informations, they didn't believe

as you said, is what I call the.. the silence.

Re. Again, when we say, what is information, we have to recognize information even as the modern social scientist view it consists of bits, that is irreducible segments of factual which would be called a bit, that is a bit of information. If you have one bit, you have one bit, if you have two, you have twice as much. You can connect two bits of information and make something more out of it than each is individually even if they add one and the other.

BOBINE 404

Burlington, Hilberg 26 (Hilberg 23, 24, 25 plans de coupe)

Qu. This question of secrecy is very difficult and puzzling, because as we said rightly, in Russia they killed the Jews in the open, they didn't hide themselves, everybody knew. It is the same in Poland. In the killing centers, all the Poles knew what was going on, all the Poles of the villages around, they knew, they saw, they heard, and even they smelled. And we see that this was not a problem at all for the nazis. They didn't care, and they didn't try to hide. And the Poles of course knew everything about the ghettos, about the ghetto life. Well, in Germany, obviously they didn't want the information about the killing to be known, and in the same time the actual killers, the guards of the extermination camps, were Geheimnisträger this means they had to keep the secret, they were not supposed to talk, they were not allowed to talk, and this is the reason why I ask you, what is the real meaning of this secrecy? Was the secrecy complete, what did they want to hide and how did they want to handle the whole..